

UNIT 441

MOÑTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

GENERAL PLAN

June 1988

HONG

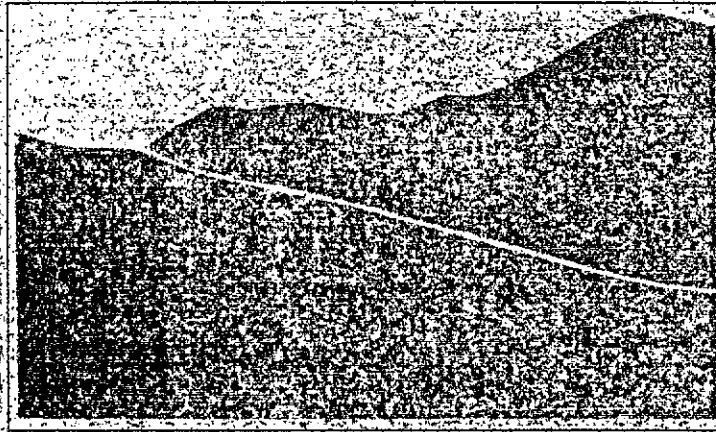
MONTANA

D E

O R O

S T A T E

P A R K



CALIFORNIA STATE PARK
AND RECREATION
COMMISSION APPROVAL

• JUNE 1988 •

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION



GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN, GOVERNOR
GORDON VAN VLECK, SECRETARY
HENRY R. AGONIA, DIRECTOR

GENERAL PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Project Manager: Don Hook
Summary and Introduction: Jill Vanneman
Resource Element Leadpersons: Ken Gray, Mary Ann Showers
Land Use Element: Jill Vanneman
Facilities Element: Jill Vanneman
Interpretive Element: Mary Helmich
Concessions Element: Mary Ann Burford
Operations Element: Dave Sears
Unresolved Issues: Jill Vanneman
Environmental Impact Element: Rob Ueltzen
Graphics: Gary Cave, Gary Caplener and Jill Vanneman
Editor: Jeff Cohen

Under the supervision of
Bruce L. Kranz, Manager
General Plan and Policy Development

With thanks to:
The many citizens who helped shape this plan through
participation at workshops and meetings, especially
members of the Docent Council of the San Luis Obispo
Coast Area State Parks.

**GENERAL PLAN
Montana de Oro
State Park**

Adopted by the
California State Park and
Recreation Commission
at its regular meeting in
Morro Bay on
June 10, 1988

This document is the final general plan and environmental impact report for Montana de Oro State Park. It was prepared following the June 1988 State Park and Recreation Commission approval of the Preliminary General Plan (dated February 1988) and Recommended Changes (dated May 17, 1988). The recommended changes have been incorporated into the text of this final plan. This plan also differs from the Preliminary General Plan by including as a new appendix the public comments received during the CEQA public review of the Preliminary General Plan, as well as the Department's response to those comments.

**RESOLUTION
19-88**

WHEREAS, the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation has presented to this Commission for approval the proposed General Plan for Montana de Oro State Park; and

WHEREAS, this reflects long-range development plans to provide for optimum use and enjoyment of the unit as well as the protection of its quality;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the State Park and Recreation Commission approves the Department of Parks and Recreation's Montana de Oro State Park Preliminary General Plan, dated February 1988, and Recommended Changes dated May 17, 1988, subject to such environmental changes as the Director of Parks and Recreation shall determine advisable and necessary to implement the provisions of said plan.

**RESOLUTION
20-88**

WHEREAS, the Department has proposed a 900-acre Natural Preserve be established in the dune system in Montana de Oro State Park to provide for recognition and protection of the area's important natural and cultural resources; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Natural Preserve provides habitat for sensitive plant species and the State and Federally-listed, endangered, Morro Bay kangaroo rat, as well as containing significant geological features and archeological sites:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to Section 5019.50 of the Public Resources Code and after proceeding in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act that the State Park and Recreation Commission hereby classifies 900 acres of the dunes and sandpit in Montana de Oro State Park as a Natural Preserve and names the said unit Morro Dunes Natural Preserve.

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

General Plan

California State Park and
Recreation Approval
June 1988

State Clearinghouse
Number 87040815



*State of California
George Deukmejian, Governor*

*The Resources Agency
Gordon Van Vleet, Secretary*

*Department of Parks and Recreation
Henry R. Agonla, Director
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001*

Contents

1 Summary

5 Introduction

- 6 Purpose of Plan
- 7 Objectives
- 8 General Plan Elements
- 10 The Planning Process
 - 11 Public Involvement
 - 11 Involvement of Other Agencies
- 12 Regional Recreation Profile
 - 12 Regional Description
 - 13 Regional Recreation Demand and Facility Deficiency
 - 14 Recreation Participation at the Unit

15 Resource Element

- 16 Resource Summary
 - 16 Natural Resources
 - 31 Cultural Resources
 - 35 Esthetic Resources
 - 36 Recreation Resources
- 37 Resource Policy Formulation
 - 37 Classification
 - 38 Declaration of Purpose
 - 39 Zone of Primary Interest
 - 39 Resource Management Policies
 - 68 Allowable Use Intensity

73 Land Use Element

- 74 Land Use Goals
- 75 Existing Land Use Conditions and Assumptions
- 78 Planning Issues and Alternatives
- 80 Land Use Objectives
- 82 Land Use Recommendations
 - 82 General Land Use
 - 83 Facility Development
 - 84 Transportation and Circulation
 - 85 Recreation Activities
 - 86 Acquisition
- 88 Land Use Plan

91 Facilities Element

- 92 Carrying Capacity
- 94 Summary of Existing and Proposed Facilities
- 96 Priorities for Development
- 99 Facilities by Area
 - 99 Pecho Valley Road
 - 100 Beach Access
 - 104 Hazard Canyon Horse Camp
 - 106 South Hazard Canyon Use Area
 - 110 Spooner Cove
 - 112 Islay Creek
 - 114 Coon Creek
 - 115 Trails
- 116 Architectural Design Concepts
- 117 Utility Concerns

119 Interpretive Element

- 120 Interpretive Considerations
 - 120 Environmental Influences
 - 121 Visitors, Their Needs and Expectations
- 122 Interpretive Period
- 122 Interpretive Themes
- 128 Proposed Interpretation
 - 128 Facilities and Media
 - 129 Visitor Activities
- 130 Interpretive Associations
- 131 Interpretive Collections
- 131 Interpretive Concessions
- 132 Recommendations

133 Concessions Element

- 134 Definition
- 134 Purpose
- 134 General Concession Policies
- 135 Existing and Recommended Concessions

137 Operations Element

- 138 Operations Organization
- 138 Existing Operations Summary
- 138 Special Considerations
- 142 Operational Goals and Implementation

145 Unresolved Issues

- 146 Field Ranch
- 147 Pecho Valley Road

149 Environmental Impact Element

- 150 Project Description
- 150 Description of Existing Environment
- 150 Significant Environmental Effects
- 151 Unavoidable Environmental Effects
- 153 Relationship Between Short-Term Uses and Maintenance or Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity
- 153 Irreversible Environmental Changes
- 153 Growth-Inducing Impacts
- 153 Effects Not Found Significant

155 Selected References

Appendices

- 151 Appendix A. User Survey and Newsletters
- 185 Appendix B. Resource Management Directives
- 187 Appendix C. Glossary
- 191 Appendix D. CEQA Comments and Responses

Maps

- 5 Map 1. Vicinity Map
- 9 Map 2. Existing Park Ownership and Facilities
- 51 Map 3. Morro Dunes Natural Preserve
- 71 Map 4. Allowable Use Intensity
- 89 Map 5. Land Use Plan
- 97 Map 6. Facilities Plan

Summary

For quick reference, this summary highlights the major resource management policies, facility and site improvements, and interpretive programs proposed for Montana de Oro State Park, one of California's largest state parks, located in San Luis Obispo County south of Morro Bay.

Overview of Resource Management Policies

The resource management policies are intended to protect and perpetuate the unit's cultural and natural resources, and to provide direction for future development efforts. They will:

- Maintain water quality and quantity.
- Minimize and correct human-caused erosion.
- Site and design future permanent facilities to avoid coastal erosion hazards.
- Perpetuate natural plant communities, including oak forest, Bishop pine forest, and native grassland communities.
- Protect and restore riparian zones.
- Protect and manage rare and endangered plants.
- Control and eradicate exotic species except where perpetuated for special management purposes.
- Develop and implement a wildfire management plan in cooperation with the California Department of Forestry.
- Designate the Morro Bay barrier dune complex as a natural preserve.
- Develop and implement management plans for the perpetuation of native wildlife species and populations, including the Morro Bay kangaroo rat, Morro shoulderband snail, and monarch butterfly.
- Protect fossil locations from disturbance.
- Nominate 30 prehistoric archeological sites as an archeological district.
- Regulate waterfowl hunting on lands adjacent to the unit.
- Manage the Coon Creek/Islay Creek roadless area to perpetuate its wilderness character.

Overview of Proposed Uses and Facilities

The following is a summary of the facilities that are proposed to be added, removed, or improved at Montana de Oro.

Pecho Valley Road

- Acquire Pecho Valley Road from the county and establish a park entrance and contact station.
- Improve roadside turnouts as vista points, turnarounds, and/or additional day-use parking spaces.

Beach Access

- Eliminate the existing Army Road parking area and fence the park boundary.
- Develop a new sandspit beach access road and 50-100 car parking area and comfort station, and improve trail access to the beach.
- Eliminate existing roadside parking on Pecho Valley Road at Hazard Canyon. Develop 10 head-in spaces off the road near the start of the existing trail to the beach.
- Develop a new 80-100 car beach access parking area and comfort station south of Hazard Canyon, and improve existing trail access to the beach.

Hazard Canyon Horse Camp

- Improve parking areas, campsites, and water system, and provide comfort stations.
- Develop a 20-vehicle equestrian trailhead staging area.
- Eliminate the existing horse camp entrance road and develop a new one.

South Hazard Canyon Use Area

- Eliminate the existing temporary environmental education camp (Camp KEEP) and develop a permanent facility at a new site through a concessionaire.
- Relocate the existing employee residence area to a less visible location at the existing Camp KEEP area in consolidation with the park's maintenance/storage facilities.
- Develop a new 50-75-unit family campground and campfire center.
- Provide a new 20-site day-use picnic area.

Spooner Cove

- Upgrade existing facilities and improve access. Provide a comfort station with a changing room and cold outdoor shower. Increase the current 15 picnic sites to 25 and provide disabled access to the beach.
- Increase the 15-vehicle parking capacity of the Bluff Trail parking area to 20 spaces and provide safety barriers along the bluff edge of the parking area.

Islay Canyon

- Adapt the Spooner ranch house as a park office/visitor center.
- Develop a bus turnaround and parking area by eliminating the overflow camping area and removing the quonset hut.
- Upgrade the existing campground by providing running water, comfort stations, and landscaping and screening between sites.
- Develop a trail rest area in upper Islay Canyon.

Coon Creek Day-Use Area

- Upgrade existing facilities through definition of parking, revegetation, and development of a comfort station and picnic sites.

Trails

- Provide additional riding and hiking trails in the park.
- Establish the California Coastal Trail link through the park.
- Provide bicycle access along Pecho Valley Road, if feasible.

Interpretation

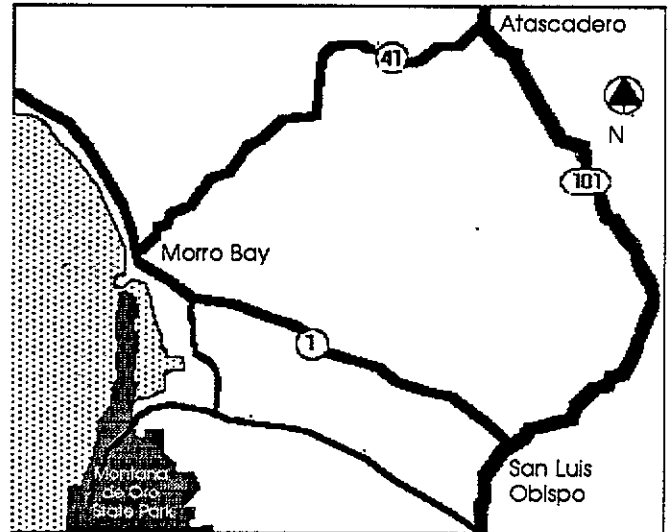
- Interpret the flow of history at Montana de Oro, from geologic times to the present.
- Provide ongoing and future interpretive programs and facilities.

Introduction

Montana de Oro State Park is located on the Pacific coast in San Luis Obispo County, 11 miles from the City of San Luis Obispo. The unit is located at the end of the county-owned coastal road near Point Buchon. Port San Luis lies 10 miles southeast; Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant is three miles south. Morro Bay and the City of Morro Bay are to the north.

At 7,828 acres, Montana de Oro is one of California's largest state parks and includes 39,000 feet of ocean frontage and 20,000 feet of bay frontage. In it are found rugged cliffs, secluded sandy beaches, coastal plains, two year-round streams in wooded canyons, and coastal scrub-covered hills dotted with coastal live oak and Bishop pine. The park gets its name "Mountain of Gold" from the color of its abundant spring wildflowers and the summer's golden dry grass. High sand dunes trapped in Pleistocene times by the natural groin of Point Buchon underlay Montana de Oro State Park and the residential area of Baywood Park-Los Osos. The Irish Hills form the backdrop to this area and act as a mountainous barrier between the northern coast and regions to the south.

The diversity of the landscape, rising from ocean and low shoreline to coastal terraces and impressively high mountain ridges, supports equally diverse forms of life, evidence of the park's primitive undeveloped character. Fortunate visitors may observe gray fox, coyote, mountain lion, long-tailed weasel, sea otter, gray whale, and great horned owl. The unique dune scrub shelters the remaining population of the state and federally listed endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat.



Vicinity Map

The park began in 1965 with the acquisition of 4,481 acres, including the Spooner ranch house. Through federal government land gifts, a major purchase in 1970, the addition of small parcels, and the transfer of the Morro Bay sandspit to the unit in 1980, the park has grown to its present size. A primitive campground was developed as an "immediate public use" facility in the mid-60s, shortly after the park was established. However, no permanent facilities have been constructed since then, although the historic Spooner ranch house was restored in 1985-86.

Situated west of San Luis Obispo and adjacent to the community of Los Osos, Montana de Oro is a popular play area for local recreationists throughout the year as well as a destination point for summer visitors from Southern California and the Central Valley.



Montana de Oro consists primarily of rolling foothills and steep canyons lying south of Morro Bay and the towns of Los Osos and Baywood Park.

Purpose of Plan

General plans are prepared to guide future management and development of State Park System units. The general plan must satisfy certain requirements of the Public Resources Code, and its approval by the California State Park and Recreation Commission is required prior to any development in the park that would constitute a permanent commitment of natural or cultural resources.

Montana de Oro State Park was established in 1965. Other than the primitive "immediate public use" campground constructed at Islay Canyon shortly afterwards, no permanent facilities have been developed. In recent years, resource issues and management problems have intensified and regional recreation demand has increased to the point where a general plan is essential for defining and resolving problems, determining appropriate levels of recreation use and development, and providing directions for resource management, land use, operation, interpretation, and acquisition for the next 20 years.

The general plan for Montana de Oro documents the planning process, summarizes the available information about the park and the relevant data used in making land use decisions, and recommends resource management policies and appropriate development. Thus as conditions change or new information becomes available, it may be necessary to update the plan. Details of facility design are not provided, nor the specific configuration of new use areas or the specific nature of resource management plans. These will be further refined when the Legislature provides funding for implementation of the general plan's recommendations. Camping, day use, and parking capacities shown by the plan are approximate only, indicating limitations on peak capacity; actual development may be less. Also, while discussions about land not owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation at the time of the plan's preparation have been included, these are intended for long-range planning purposes only and do not represent an intention or commitment to acquire.

Objectives

The general plan is a tool for meeting the following broad objectives to:

1. Protect and perpetuate the unit's natural and cultural resources.
2. Provide necessary facilities for visitor use to help meet current and future recreational demand.
3. Determine appropriate interpretive services and facilities for educational and recreational purposes.
4. Provide opportunities for concession services and facilities, where appropriate.
5. Promote a safe, enjoyable, and well-managed visitor experience.
6. Equip the Department of Parks and Recreation, county, state, and federal agencies, private organizations, and individuals with a tool for coordinating their efforts to meet these objectives.

General Plan Elements

The plan is made up of the following elements which reflect the department's responsibility to fulfill certain goals:

- The **Resource Element** evaluates the natural and cultural resources of the park and sets management policies for protection, restoration, and use of these resources.
- The **Land Use Element** describes current land uses and relevant planning issues, determines proposed land uses consistent with the resources and unit classification, and outlines land use objectives and recommendations.
- The **Facilities Element** describes current facilities and proposed development to enhance public recreational experiences and enjoyment of the park resources and values, and establishes priorities for park development.
- The **Interpretive Element** proposes programs and facilities for public information and interpretation of the park's natural and cultural resource values.
- The **Concessions Element** summarizes opportunities to provide appropriate goods or services to the public through concessions in existing or proposed facilities.
- The **Operations Element** describes specific operational and maintenance requirements and guidelines unique to the park.
- The **Environmental Impact Element** serves as the Environmental Impact Report required by the California Environmental Quality Act. It assesses environmental effects, and proposes mitigation measures and alternatives.

EXISTING OWNERSHIP AND FACILITIES

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION

SANDSPIT BEACH ACCESS
INFORMAL 50-70 CAR PARKING AREA,
UNPAVED ACCESS ROAD OVER
PRIVATE PROPERTY

**HAZARD CYN.
BEACH ACCESS**
ROADSIDE PARKING,
80-100 CARS

ISLAY CREEK
51-UNIT PRIMITIVE CAMPGROUND
CAMPFIRE CENTER, PIT TOILETS
MAINTENANCE/STORAGE BLDG.
HISTORIC RANCH HOUSE

SPOONER COVE
INFORMAL 144-CAR
PARKING AREA,
PIT TOILETS,
15 PICNIC SITES
15 CAR BLUFF
PARKING AREA

COON CREEK
INFORMAL 40-CAR
PARKING AREA,
PIT TOILETS

PECHO VALLEY ROAD

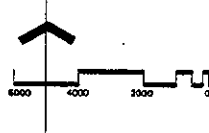
**HAZARD CANYON
HORSE CAMP**
UNPAVED ACCESS ROAD
6 GROUP CAMPS,
PIT TOILETS

SOUTH HAZARD CYN.
KERN COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION CAMP
EMPLOYEE RESIDENCE AREA

ISLAY CANYON
HISTORIC BARN

TRAILS

- FOOT TRAIL
- FOOT/EQUESTRIAN TRAIL
- SERVICE ROAD



Map 2

DRAWING NO. 23907

The Planning Process

The development of the general plan for Montana de Oro State Park was part of a larger planning effort for all the State Park System units in the Morro Bay area, including Los Osos Oaks State Reserve, Morro Strand and Atascadero State Beaches, and Morro Bay State Park. The planning process is a comprehensive one. In fulfilling the department's dual mission to protect and perpetuate the resources and provide recreation, preparation of the general plan involves consideration of a number of factors: public and departmental interests and concerns, the opportunities and constraints of the park's existing land uses and physical resources, and access to and circulation within the unit, as well as regional and statewide recreational needs.

Three broad steps mark the plan's progress: the resource inventory and analysis, development of alternative land use and facility plans, and synthesis of a single plan. Public input at all three stages is essential to creating a plan responsive to visitor concerns and desires.

An inventory of the park's natural, cultural, esthetic, and recreational resources was developed through file and literature searches and field observation. Evaluation of the resources determined the appropriate management policies for protection, perpetuation, enhancement, or restoration of important resources. Prior to any additional planning, the resource inventory summary and proposed management policies were presented publicly, and the written document, the Resource Element, was circulated for public review and comment. Resource constraints and sensitivities helped to establish appropriate and manageable recreational use intensity levels which provided parameters for the alternative plans that followed.

Alternative plans were generated to explore different kinds of day and overnight facilities that might be desirable, as well as various arrangements and capacities of use areas. Following comments from the public and agencies, a single plan for the unit was developed incorporating facility improvements, interpretive program needs, concession concepts, and operational requirements. The single plan was refined after additional public review and comment.

Approval of the preliminary general plan by the California State Park and Recreation Commission in June 1988 was followed by preparation of this document, the final form of the general plan.

Public Involvement

The public expressed its interests and concerns at various stages in the planning process. The public involvement part of the planning effort for all five Morro Bay Area State Park System units began with distribution of a user survey at the units during the peak visitor use season in 1986. Several hundred questionnaires were returned, allowing planners to develop a profile of users and use at each of the Morro Bay area parks and of people's general philosophies about land use and facilities at the units. This formed the start of a mailing list for the units that resulted in over 800 names of people interested in planning the future of the five units.

A series of public workshops began, held at three critical stages of the general plan's evolution and followed by newsletters summarizing the results of the workshops for those unable to attend. The first public workshop presented the Resource Element and asked people to describe their needs, concerns, and major issues. Comments on the alternative plans were received at the second workshop. The third public meeting was held to present the draft plan and receive comment on it. The meetings were attended by a broad representation of user groups whose enthusiastic participation has strongly influenced this plan.

Public comment on the preliminary general plan was made through the CEQA process. The department responded to these comments (see Appendix D: CEQA Comments and Response to Comments) and recommended changes to the Preliminary General plan. The preliminary plan and recommended changes were presented to the State Park and Recreation Commission in June 1988 at a public hearing in the City of Morro Bay. Following additional public testimony at the hearing, the Commission approved the Preliminary Plan and Recommended Changes. These changes have been incorporated into the text of this document, the final general plan.

Involvement of Other Agencies

Agencies that have been contacted or have expressed an interest in the general plan for Montana de Oro State Park include:

- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Coastal Commission
- California Coastal Conservancy
- California Department of Water Resources
- State Lands Commission
- San Luis Obispo County (Department of Planning and Building, Engineering Department, Park and Facilities Division, Department of General Services)
- Pacific Gas and Electric
- U.S. Fish and Wild-life Service
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- Kern County Office of Education

Regional Recreation Profile

In fulfilling its recreation mission, the department attempts to make State Park System investments as relevant to regional needs as possible. Understanding the resources of an individual region, the recreation needs of its residents, and the impacts of recreation seekers from outside the region is critical to providing meaningful recreational opportunities in California. Measurements of recent participation levels in State Park System-related recreation activities assist the department in allocating its resources for recreation needs.

The regional recreation profile provides a brief analysis of recreation needs by planning district (a grouping of contiguous counties with general economic and geographic similarities). Because California is a state with great social, economic, and geographic diversity, the division into manageable geographic units allows the department to more accurately identify recreation needs, problems, and

priorities. These planning districts are designated by the state Office of Planning and Research and are generally consistent with the boundaries of the regional councils of governments.

Regional Description

Morro Bay Area State Park System units are located in San Luis Obispo County along the central California coastline about halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. This stretch of coastline is designated as Planning District 7 and, in addition to San Luis Obispo County, includes four other counties: Santa Barbara, Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. Moderately populated, Planning District 7 has about 4 percent of the state's population, ranking fifth in population density, yet only 2 percent of the region is urbanized. It retains a rural flavor, even wilderness in parts.

The land is mostly mountainous, extending from the redwood-forested Santa Cruz Mountains in the north through the rugged back-country of Big Sur to the chaparral and oak-covered Santa Lucia and Santa Ynez mountains in the south. Level land is found in the narrow river valleys

and along the coastal plain. Some of these flat areas are coastal California's most productive agricultural lands, helping to make agriculture the basis of the region's economy.

The character of the district's 346 miles of coastline ranges from predominantly rocky beaches and steep rocky headlands to gentle coastal bluffs and sandy beaches. Tourism and recreation-associated services comprise the second most important industry in the district, centering on the cities of Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz, and the Monterey Peninsula, but relying on the region's wide beaches, spectacular natural beauty, and unspoiled areas for support.

The coast provides most of the region's recreation opportunities, although a variety of water-associated recreation activities are offered at several reservoirs. The district is a recreation destination zone for large numbers of tourists from the San Francisco Bay area, southern

California, and the Central Valley. Sandy beaches and relatively warm waters in the south attract swimmers and surfers. Sand dunes at Pismo Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area are popular with dune buggy enthusiasts. The harbors at Santa Barbara, Morro Bay, Santa Cruz, and Monterey are sought out for fishing. The beautiful coastline along Highway 1 attracts sightseers from around the world. Attractions such as Point Lobos, Carmel Mission, Pebble Beach, Cannery Row, Santa Cruz Boardwalk, and Hearst Castle are known far beyond the region's borders.

Regional Recreation Demand and Facility Deficiencies

Of the 11,230 square miles in the planning district, one-third is in public ownership. The U.S. Forest Service in the Los Padres National Forest manages a considerable portion of that land and is a principal recreation supplier. The California Department of Parks and Recreation manages 56 percent (63,000 acres) of the district's state-owned lands and offers a diversity of landholdings available for recreation, including 75 miles of coastline. Although only 6 percent of the total State Park System land area is in Planning District 7, almost 30 percent of the total State Park System visitor use occurs in this region, mostly as a result of heavy visitation at Pismo Dunes SVRA and Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument.

State Park System units in Planning District 7

offer some of the most attractive and popular recreation opportunities in the state. Thousands of campers, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, and other recreationists converge at Pismo SB and Pismo Dunes SVRA annually. Numerous state parks and state beaches offer camping and a gamut of beach and water-related recreation activities, including skin diving in underwater reserves and the more passive recreation pursuits of sightseeing, hiking, and interpretive walks. On the whole, recreation use of the region is year-round, with high seasonal peaks, particularly during the summer and weekends.

The demand for coastal camping stretches the length of the region's coastline from Santa Cruz to Santa Barbara. Many coastal state park unit campgrounds are filled to capacity and overflowing more than half of the nights in June, July, and August. Given the drawing power of the coastal resources, and existing and potential use of State Park System

facilities, existing facilities are inadequate to accommodate recreation demand, particularly in the summer months.

As the state continues to grow, recreation demand will increase the severity of facility deficiencies. Between 1955 and 1985, California's population doubled, while attendance in the State Park System grew ten-fold, from 7 million to almost 70 million visitors annually. By 1990, the total annual demand for recreation in Planning District 7 will be more than 373 million participation-days. For the four activities most commonly provided by the State Park System (camping, picnicking, boating, and hiking), between 6 and 11 percent of needed statewide facilities exist in Planning District 7. This represents a District 7 deficiency by 1990 of 6,450 campsites, 12,843 picnic sites, and 1,642 miles of trail. In San Luis Obispo County, with a 40 percent projected

population growth by the year 2000, the highest projected demand is for picnicking, ocean swimming, camping, hiking/backpacking, and nature appreciation, closely followed by visiting scenic areas, sunning, and body surfing.

Recreation Participation at the Unit

Montana de Oro State Park reported an annual attendance of 421,743 visitors in 1986, residents mostly of Planning District 7 (36%), southern California (28%), and the Central Valley (16%). The most popular recreation activities at the unit include camping, nature observation, walking, hiking, beachcombing, horseback riding, birdwatching, photography, sunbathing, and swimming. Also popular are hang-gliding, scuba/skin diving, and mountain biking. The Morro Bay area is the primary destination of most park visitors (87%). Almost all (96%) arrive by auto; more than half the park's visitors are day users. The average campground stay is three nights.

Resource Element

Montana de Oro's foothills and peaks are part of the Irish Hills of the San Luis Range and form the backdrop to the unit's beautiful coastline and wide marine terraces.



In compliance with sections of the Public Resources Code and California Administrative Code*, the Resource Element sets forth long-range management objectives for the natural and cultural resources of the unit. Specific actions or limitations required to achieve these objectives are also set forth in this element. Maintenance operations and details of resource management are left for inclusion in specific resource management programs that will be prepared at a later date.

This element also identifies specific resource sensitivities and physical constraints, and establishes the department's guidelines for acceptable levels of development and use with respect to these concerns.

The Resource Element has two main parts. The first is a brief summary of the unit's resources. More detailed information on these subjects is on file with the Department of Parks and Recreation. The second part deals with policy formulation, which begins with unit classification and declaration of purpose and concludes with specific resource management policies.

* Section 5002.2, Subsection (b) of Division 5, Chapter 1 of the Public Resources Code and Chapter 1, Section 4332 of Title 14 of the California Administrative Code.

Resource Summary

Natural Resources

- Topography

Between Point Estero and Point Buchon, the central California coastline curves inland, creating Estero Bay. Morro Bay, one of the coast's largest and few remaining natural estuaries, is located within Estero Bay. At the center of this curving coastline lies the city of Morro Bay, and southward, high sand dunes, trapped in Pleistocene times by the natural groin of Point Buchon, underlay the area known today as Baywood Park-Los Osos and the northern portion of Montana de Oro State Park. The Irish Hills form the backdrop to this area and act as a mountainous barrier between the northern coast and regions to the south.

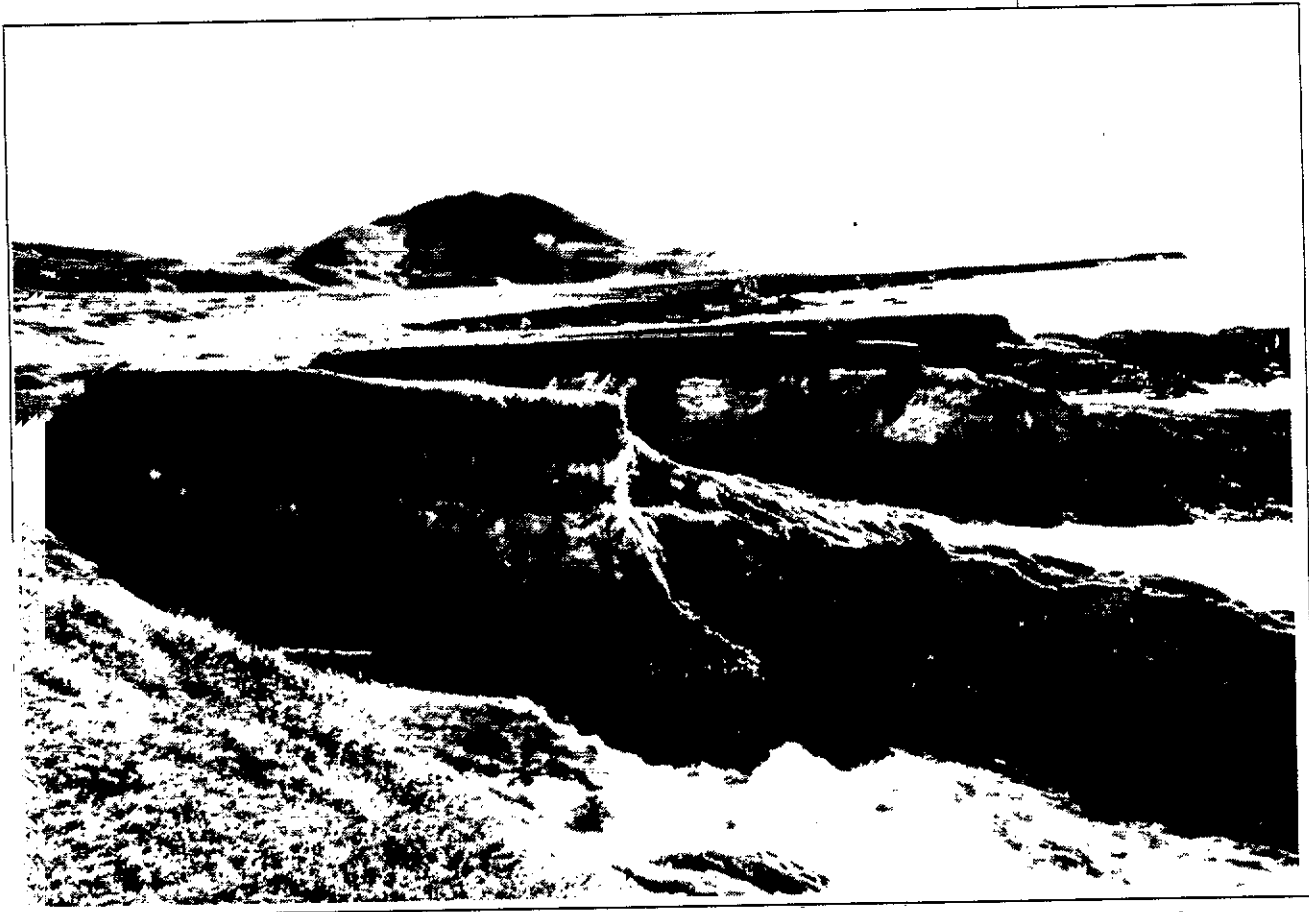
Montana de Oro State Park is located at the southern end of the Coast Ranges Geomorphic Province. In the area of the park, the principal ranges are the Santa Lucia Range trending northwest to southeast and the Irish Hills of the San Luis Range paralleling the Santa Lucia Range to the south. Between these two ranges lies the Los Osos Valley, bordered on the west by Estero Bay and the Pacific Ocean, and on the southeast by the San Luis Valley.

Located south of the town of Cuesta-by-the-Sea and bounded on the north by the Los Osos Valley, the unit is a mountainous area within the Irish Hills of the San Luis Range. Most of its 7,828.23 acres consist of rolling foothills and steep, vegetated slopes and canyons trending roughly from east to west. The highest elevations in the park are Alan Peak (1,649 feet), Oats Mountain (1,373 feet), Valencia Peak (1,347 feet), and Hazard Mountain (1,076 feet). The unit is bounded on the west by 39,200 feet of waterfront footage along the southern end of Estero Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Within the unit south of Islay Creek, the coastline consists of wide, wave-cut terraces bordered by steep, deeply dissected rocky headlands and wave-cut benches, offshore sea stacks, and submerged rocks. North of Islay Creek, the rocky coast gives way to sand dunes and sandy beaches, including the long Morro Bay sandspit with its beaches and large dunes at the northernmost extension of the unit.

Within the park, the principal stream drainages generally run east to west. The northernmost drainage, Hazard Canyon, holds an intermittent stream, while the centrally located Islay Creek is permanent, as is Coon Creek flowing near the southern border of the unit. Some intermittent streams may flow directly from the hills to the sea, sometimes greatly eroding the shore. Level areas are found along Hazard, Islay, and Coon creeks and on the wide coastal terraces bordered by rocky headlands.

• Meteorology

The Morro Bay area has a Mediterranean climate, which is characterized by mild temperatures with little diurnal fluctuation, moist winters, and warm, dry summers. Low cloudiness or fog often occurs along the coast during the summer with an average frequency of 200-250 hours per month. The average annual temperature ranges from 56° to 60°F, with summer maximums of 65°-70° and winter maximums in the 50s or low 60s. There are usually 40 to 50 days per year with measurable precipitation. An average of approximately 27 inches of rainfall falls each year. Wind summaries during the period July 1967-October 1969 near the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant site show strong local canyon effects, with coastal readings showing predominant WNW and NW winds. Wind data at the PG&E Morro Bay power plant (July-August 1973) show the predominant wind direction to be from south to west.



South of Islay Creek the coastline consists of steep, wave-cut bluffs backed by wide marine terraces.

Montana de Oro State Park is located in the Non-Salinas Valley sub-area of the South Central Coast Air Basin. Air quality is excellent with no significant air pollution problems. The major pollutants monitored within this basin are ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, hydrocarbons, and total suspended particulate matter (TSP). The Non-Salinas Valley sub-area meets state and federal standards for ozone, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen dioxide; the sub-area is unclassified for TSP and sulfur dioxide.

• Hydrology

Montana de Oro State Park is situated within the San Luis Obispo Hydrologic Unit of the Central Coastal Drainage Province. The San Luis Obispo Hydrologic Unit covers 780 square miles on the western slopes of the Santa Lucia Range, extending from the Monterey-San Luis Obispo County line to the western drainage divide of the Santa Maria River. It is characterized by mountainous and hilly terrain, with many small stream valleys. Montana de Oro State Park is in the Los Osos and Point San Luis Hydrologic Subareas of the San Luis Obispo Subunit. Three streams, Hazard Canyon Creek, Islay Creek, and Coon Creek, drain this mountainous unit. Hazard Canyon Creek and the tributaries of these creeks are ephemeral, and some of them emanate from springs high in the hills. Typical of coastal streams, they drain into narrow, steep-sided valleys and permit little deposition of sediment. Flowing in a remote and undeveloped area used primarily for nonirrigated pasture, these surface waters have not been

analyzed, and no water quality problems have been identified for the unit. Water used in the park is trucked in from the City of Morro Bay and stored in tanks.

The rocks beneath the hills are in general less porous and permeable than sediments found in

the Los Osos Valley, so the available quantity of groundwater in the southern part of the unit is small and its flow is restricted primarily to fractures. Beneath the unit north of Hazard Canyon is the Los Osos Valley Ground Water Basin held in Recent alluvium



Islay Creek is one of only two permanent streams in the park.

and upper Pleistocene old sand dunes with underlying lower Pleistocene Paso Robles water-bearing sediments. Precipitation is the main source of recharge through the flat lowlands of Los Osos Creek and its tributaries, and springs that emanate from exposed Franciscan bedrock could be another source. The groundwater level is higher during the spring than in the fall, and is the lowest during pumpage. Groundwater overdraft has occurred with overpumpage during dry periods, resulting in transitory problems with saltwater intrusion and high levels of total dissolved solids and nitrates.

The coastal strand of Montana de Oro falls within the 100-year and 500-year coastal flood zone and is also susceptible to coastal flooding by seismically induced waves (tsunamis). Islay and Coon creeks have estimated 100-year flood zones involving narrow areas immediately bordering the creeks.

• Geology

Montana de Oro State Park consists of a barrier spit, a coastal terrace, and uplands of the western San Luis Mountains Range. The park contains ragged seacliffs with spectacular examples of differential erosion and excellent exposures of the Miguelito member of the Pismo Formation.

The oldest rocks found in Montana de Oro State Park represent the basement of most of the Coast Ranges — Franciscan sheared greywacke, melange, and a narrow band of serpentized ultrabasic rocks exposed only in the northeasternmost part of the Islay Creek watershed. The sheared rocks in that area are particularly prone to landslides. The Franciscan exposure is a breached (eroded) anticline trending northwest and involving the much younger Vaqueros Sandstone, Obispo, and Pismo formations as well.

The Vaqueros Sandstone is a coarse-grained bioclastic (containing shell fragments) sandstone. Partial re-solution and secondary cementation

of its abundant calcareous components make this formation very resistant, tending to form ridges. Pecten shells are locally abundant and the weathered slopes of the formation are often littered with broken pecten and oyster shell fragments.

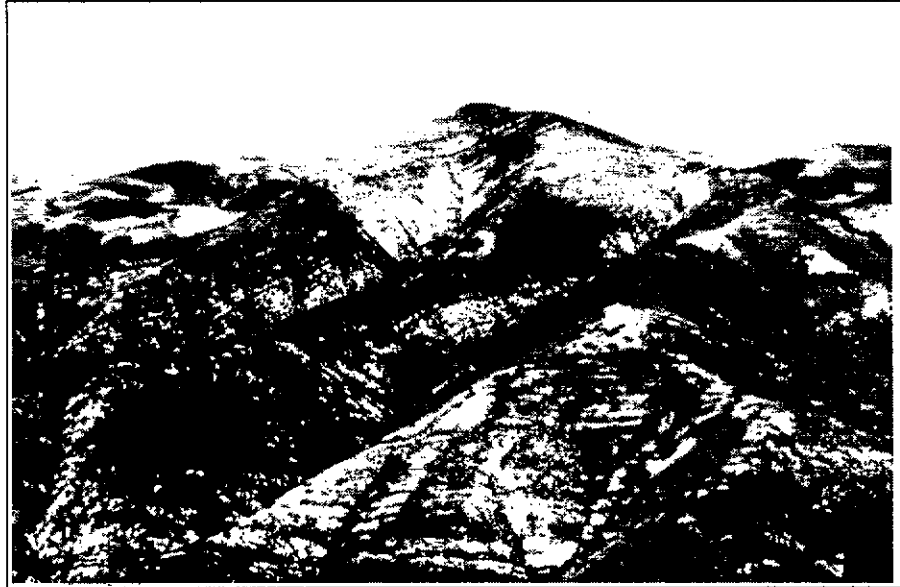
The Miguelito member of the Pismo Formation is exposed in the seacliffs and makes up most of the highlands of the park, including Valencia, Hazard, Oats, and Alan peaks. The Miguelito member is late Miocene to early Pliocene in age (deposited 5 to 14 million years ago). It is composed of repetitive beds of diatomite or clayey porcellanite, diatomaceous mudstone, dolomite, and chert. It also includes a relatively soft, well-bedded siltstone and bituminous layers in the eastern boundary protrusion in the northern area of the park. The basal tar sand yields sticky black tar seeps. Fractures within the mudstones and shales of the unit can also be tar-filled. A band of tuff and perlite glass and breccia of the Miocene Obispo Formation also crops

out along the southern flank of the breached anticline north of Islay Creek.

The Miocene Monterey Formation is exposed only in the very southernmost part of the park — along both sides of lower Coon Creek and along the left bank (south side) of the upper reaches of the creek. The Monterey Formation is composed of resistant hard siliceous shale and interbedded chert. Although the color is variable, it generally weathers to chalky white and is white and brown to grey and reddish-brown on fresh surfaces. The Monterey Formation is typically rhythmically bedded, with individual beds between one-half and 6 inches thick. The rocks are brittle, with a sub-conchoidal fracture; the western cherts are generally reddish-brown to black.

The geologic structures within Montana de Oro trend northwest, affecting the lineation of ridges and valleys, with Coon, Islay, and Hazard creeks all flowing to the northwest until they meet the lesser gradient of the marine terrace, where they vary their course.

The homoclinal ridge of Valencia Peak is only one of the unit's interesting geomorphic features.



Geomorphically, Montana de Oro State Park is a very interesting place because of the obvious relationship between bedding and hillslopes, the spectacular wave-cut platforms below the seacliffs, and the extensive sand dune deposits. Classic sedimentary sequences and structures are revealed in the seacliffs and in the stream-cut canyons. The axis of the syncline that extends from Oats Peak northwestward toward the "A. C. Lewis Pecho" exploratory oil well north of Islay Creek forms spectacular synclinal ridges, and Valencia Peak is a textbook example of a homoclinal ridge, with the dip of the strata

approximating the angle of the north slope.

The barrier spit across Morro Bay and the dunes east of the marine terrace are evidence of a much different climate and higher sea level more than 18,000 years ago. The relative elevation of sea level was much higher between 4,000 and 18,000 years ago, following the maximum Wisconsin glaciation. Since about 4,000 years ago, the sea level has remained fairly stable. The older dunes are imperfect parabola structures partially stabilized by coastal dune scrub vegetation. These older (pre-Flandrian) dunes have been

recognized in only four locations in California: Monterey Bay, Morro Bay, Santa Maria River, and El Segundo.

The coastline south of Hazard Canyon is rapidly retreating as evidenced by the vertical seacliffs, sea stacks, and even small islands obviously once connected to shore. Old wagon roads and fencelines have been severed by seacliff retreat. The protruding fingers of diatomaceous shales of the Pismo Formation have been stripped of terrace cover and fail in blocks, according to the orientation of bedding, joints, and fractures.

No active faults have been mapped in the unit; however, the Hosgri fault offshore, the Sur-Nacimiento, Rinconada, and San Andreas faults are all seismically active. The San Andreas, while the most distant fault, is capable of generating the most damaging event, with a Richter magnitude of 8.0 to 8.5.

The Hosgri fault has recently been linked with the San Simeon and San Gregorio faults to the north. The Hosgri fault and its northern "cousins" apparently are responsible for the general trend of the coastline in central California. Cumulative offset of about 100 kilometers and an average slip rate of about 1.6 centimeters per year have been attributed to the Hosgri fault. These statistics are significant when compared to the San Andreas slip rate of about 3.2 centimeters per year. These differential (right lateral) motions represent transform fault movements as the North American plate meets and adjusts to the movement of the Pacific plate.

• Soils

Montana de Oro State Park is located within the southernmost tip of the Northwestern Coastal Ranges Soil Region (Soil Region I), which is characterized by steep mountain ranges and small valleys. Seventeen soil map units are found within the boundaries of the park.

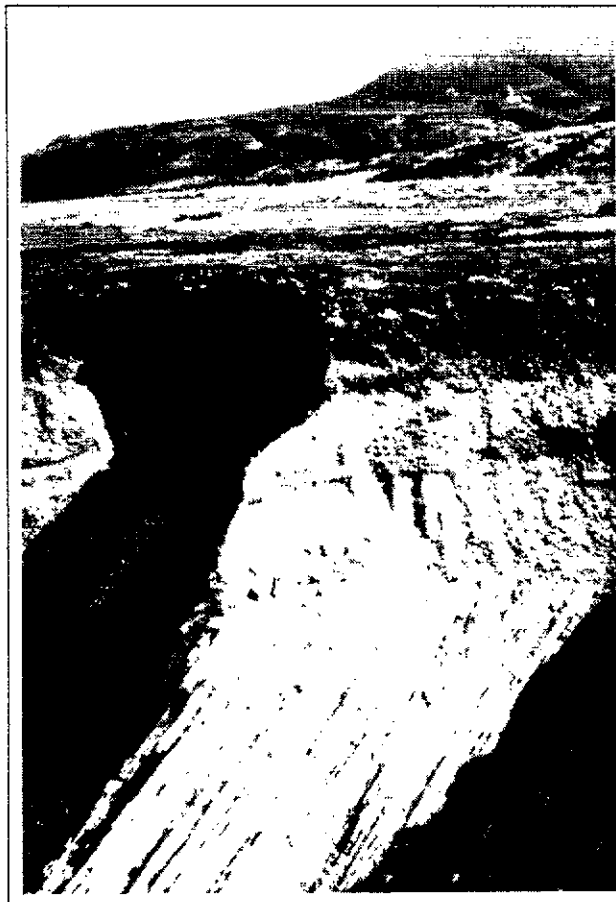
The sandspit consists of Beaches and Dune Land. Beaches are essentially barren of vegetation, but Dune Land, composed of sand dunes, can be stabilized by vegetation. These soils have similar constraints: soil permeability is high and very rapid, surface runoff is slow, the available water capacity is low, and the erosion hazard due to wind and wave action is high.

The dune areas south of the sandspit are made up primarily of Arnold loamy sand, Baywood fine sand, Dune Land, and Santa Lucia shaly clay loam. Arnold loamy sand formed in residual material weathered from soft sandstone, Baywood fine sand formed in

deposits of wind-blown sand, and Santa Lucia shaly clay loam formed in residual material weathered from sandstone or shale. Constraints associated with these soils include steep slope, shallow depth to rock in places, seepage and piping characteristics, and soil too sandy for most uses. In addition, large patches of Still gravelly sandy clay loam and Lopez-Rock outcrop complex occur on steeper slopes in the surrounding area. These patches support coastal sage scrub vegetation and have constraints such as shallow depth to rock, slow percolation, and seepage and piping characteristics.

The coastal terraces in the southern coastal portion of the unit are made up of Still gravelly sandy clay loam that formed in alluvium weathered from sedimentary rocks. Constraints here include slow percolation, piping characteristics, and great depth to water.

The majority of the soils in the mountainous part of the park (the western extension of the Irish Hills) are Lopez very



Still gravelly loam over Pismo shale is the characteristic soil type of the park's southern coastal terraces.

shaly clay loam and Lopez-Rock outcrop complex. Smaller areas of Chamise shaly loam and Elder sandy loam, Baywood fine sand, and Salinas silty clay loam also occur here. The Lopez very shaly clay loam and the Lopez-Rock outcrop complex formed in residual material weathered from hard shale. The constraints associated with these soils are those of steep slope, shallow

depth to rock, small stones, and seepage. Elder sandy loam formed in alluvium weathered from sedimentary rocks and exhibits piping characteristics. Salinas silty clay loam is a deep, well-drained soil also formed in alluvium weathered from sedimentary rocks. This soil erodes easily, has slow percolation, and exhibits piping characteristics. These soils support

coastal sage scrub vegetation with some chamise chaparral on the western aspects of the hills.

Level upland areas, the "bald" ridges, are vegetated by grassland surrounded by coastal sage scrub. Under this vegetation lies Santa Lucia shaly clay loam and Santa Lucia very shaly clay loam. These well-drained, moderately deep, very steep soils are formed in residual material weathered from sandstone or shale. Constraints associated with these soils include steep slopes, shallow depth to rock, and small stones.

In the northeast corner of the park, north of the canyon of Islay Creek, the Nacimiento-Calodo complex is found. These steep, well-drained soils formed in residual material weathered from calcareous sandstone or shale. These soils have the constraints of steep slope, shallow depth to rock, low strength, and slow percolation.

• **Plant Life**

Montana de Oro State Park is within the Central Coast Region of the California Floristic Province. The relative stability of the climate, as well as habitat diversity, makes the Central Coast Region one of the richer areas of endemic taxa in California.

There is a wide diversity of vegetation within Montana de Oro State Park. The eight vegetation types and 18 corresponding plant communities occur in the unit are shown at the right.

Annual introduced grassland dominates large portions of the coastal terrace south of Hazard Canyon and is found in Islay Creek Canyon. Dominant species include slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), soft chess (*Bromus mollis*), and foxtail (*Hordeum leporinum*). Small stands of relic native grasslands occur in Islay Creek and Coon Creek canyons and on coastal terraces. Purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*), small-flowered melic (*Melica imperfecta*), and foothill needlegrass (*Stipa lepida*) are dominant species. Mustard fields on the coastal

Vegetation Type	Plant Community
Valley and Foothill Grasslands	Annual Introduced Grassland Stipa Grassland (Native Grassland) Mustard Fields (Exotic)
Marshes and Swamps	Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Freshwater Marsh
Coastal Foredunes	Northern Coastal Foredunes
Coastal Scrub	Coastal Dune Scrub Coastal Sage Scrub Central Coastal Scrub Dune Chaparral Dune Oak Scrub Huckleberry Scrub
Chaparral	Mixed Chaparral
Broadleaf Evergreen Forest	Live Oak Forest Eucalyptus Forest (Exotic)
Streambank Woodland and Forest	Willow/Cottonwood Riparian Forest Willow Thicket
Closed-cone Coniferous Forest	Bishop Pine Forest

terrace to the south of Islay Creek are dominated by wild radish (*Raphanus sativa*), wild mustard (*B. campestris*), black mustard (*B. nigra*), and bur clover (*Medicago hispida*).

Coastal salt marsh and freshwater marsh vegetation are in a narrow band on the shore of



The wide diversity of vegetation within the park includes 18 plant communities; shown here, coastal dune scrub.

Sharks Inlet. Salt marsh vegetation, characterized by sea-blite (*Suaeda californica*), pickleweed (*Salicornia* spp.), and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), occurs on the eastern shore of the inlet. The western shore is dominated by cattail (*Typha* sp.), spike rush (*Juncus* sp.), and tule (*Scirpus* sp.) in freshwater seeps from the base of the dunes.

Northern coastal foredunes appear in areas of sand accumulation along the coast. Vegetation is low and succulent and dominated by herbaceous perennials. Ice plant (*Carpobrotus aequilateralis*), beach bur (*Ambrosia chamissonis*), and sand verbena (*Abronia* spp.) are dominant species in exposed, windy sites. Beach evening primrose (*Camissonia cheiranthifolia*) and beach poppy (*Eschscholzia californica* var. *maritima*) grow in more sheltered sites. Coastal dune scrub develops in dune areas having a relatively stable substrate that accumulates some organic matter. Mock heather (*Haplopappus ericoides*), branching beach aster (*Corethrogyne filaginifolia*), and silverleaf lupine (*Lupinus albifrons*) are the

principal shrub species. Herbaceous species include California croton (*Croton californicus*) and sea lettuce (*Dudleya caespitosa*).

The most common plant community in the park, coastal sage scrub, also called "soft chaparral," occurs on south-facing slopes, in areas with thin soil and good drainage, and in areas of recent disturbance.

This vegetation is composed of dense, highly-branched, semi-woody, drought-deciduous shrubs. It is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and bush monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*). Central coastal scrub is similar to coastal sage scrub, but occurs on moister sites and is dominated by species that are less adapted to summer drought. Dominant species include sticky bush monkeyflower, poison oak, and coyote brush.

Dune chaparral appears on stabilized sand dunes. It is often very dense and spinescent, and rich in species diversity. In Montana de Oro State Park, dune chaparral is well developed to the north of Hazard Canyon. Domi-

nant species include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), deerbrush, buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus* var. *fascicularis*), holly-leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and Morro Bay manzanita (*Arctostaphylos morroensis*).

Dune oak scrub is characterized by dwarfed coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) found on old, stabilized sand dunes. These trees are large, multibranched shrubs, approximately 6 to 8 feet high. The dwarf oaks are associated with buckbrush and Morro Bay manzanita and form dense impenetrable vegetation. Dune oak scrub grows north of Hazard Canyon. Morro Bay manzanita is common in this community.

Huckleberry scrub occurs locally in Islay Creek and Coon Creek drainages, and is dominated by huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*). This scrub vegetation is found on cool, shaded north-facing slopes above the canyon bottom riparian zones.

Mixed chaparral grows largely on north-facing slopes and ridges with little soil development,

or on slightly mesic south-facing slopes. Dominant species include chamise, Pecho manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pechoensis*), and Carmel ceanothus (*Ceanothus griseus*).

Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) forms small forests on north-facing slopes and in the sheltered ravines in the Coon Creek drainage. Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) and tan oak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*) are localized co-dominants in this area. Trees are 20 to 25 feet high and multitrunked. Understory species include bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum* var. *pubescens*), poison

oak, and annual and perennial grasses.

A dense forest of nonnative blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and red gum (*E. camaldulensis*) exists in the vicinity of Hazard Canyon. The eucalyptus was planted in 1908 by Alexander Hazard, who hoped that forest products could eventually be harvested from the property. The eucalyptus were planted in regular rows, which are still visible. Seedlings have become established, extending the original extent of the plantation.

A stratified riparian forest dominated by

*In addition to 16 rare or endangered plant species at Montana de Oro, several special interest plants can be found, including three species of hybrid sand verbena (shown here, yellow sand verbena, *Abronia latifolia*).*



black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and arroyo willow (*S. lasiolepis*) occurs along Islay and Coon Creeks. Canopy trees are about 30 feet high. Mid-canopy species include blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), California wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*), and western dogwood (*Cornus occidentalis*). Within Hazard Canyon, riparian forest has been nearly displaced by eucalyptus forest. Well-developed arroyo willow thickets occur on the periphery of the riparian forest along upper Hazard Creek, near the mouth of Islay Creek, and in Coon Creek.

Bishop pine forest grows on diatomaceous shale on the north-facing slopes to the south of Coon Creek. The understory is composed primarily of huckleberry and Pecho manzanita. Other understory species include poison oak, bracken fern, and sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*).

According to California Native Plant Society data, 16 rare or endangered vascular plant species are reported in Montana de Oro State Park and the immediate vicinity:

- *Arctostaphylos cruzensis*
Arroyo de la Cruz manzanita
- *Arctostaphylos morroensis*
Morro Bay manzanita
- *Arctostaphylos pechoensis*
Pecho manzanita
- *Castilleja latifolia*
Monterey paintbrush
- *Cordylanthus maritimus* ssp. *maritimus*
Salt marsh bird's-beak¹
- *Dithyrea maritima*
Beach spectacle pod
- *Erigeron foliosus* var. *blochmaniae*
Blochman's leafy daisy

¹ Federal-listed "Endangered"

• *Eriodictyon altissimum*
Indian knob mountain balm²

• *Erysimum insulare*
Island wallflower

• *Erysimum suffrutescens* var. *grandifolium*
Large-leaved wallflower

• *Grindelia latifolia*
Coastal gumplant

• *Malacothamnus palmeri*
Santa Lucia mallow

• *Malacothrix incana*
Dune malacothrix

• *Monardella crispa*
Crisp monardella

• *Monardella undulata* var. *frutescens*
San Luis Obispo monardella

• *Prunus fasciculata* var. *punctata*
Sand almond

² State-listed "Endangered"

In addition to rare and endangered species, several special interest plants appear within Montana de Oro State Park. These include:

1) Bishop pine — near southern limits of species;

2) *Pholisma arenarium* — root parasite on mock heather;

3) hybrid sand verbenas — hybrids of three species of *Abronia*, *A. latifolia*, *A. umbellata*, and *A. maritima*; and

4) pink-flowered currant (*Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinotum*) — near its southern limit.

Approximately 30 species of exotic plants are reported at Montana de Oro State Park. Many of these are associated with previous settlements, grazing, and farming. The most widespread of these are alien grasses, mustard, filaree (*Erodium* spp.), and eucalyptus.

• Animal Life

Montana de Oro State Park includes eight different biotic communities, each offering different habitat opportunities to many species of wildlife. They are the coastal strand (including the Morro Bay sandspit), coastal scrub, coastal dune chaparral, grassland, riparian woodland, coast live oak woodland, closed-cone coniferous forest, and introduced eucalyptus forest.

The coastal strand includes the sandy shore and foredunes immediately behind the beach. Despite the harsh environment, the animal life here is plentiful and diverse. The beach receives nutrients from the ocean that feed its burrowing invertebrate populations. Willets, marbled godwits, and least sandpipers can be seen searching for food in the sand. Several species of gull frequent the beach to scavenge, as do some terrestrial birds such as the Brewer's blackbird and white-crowned sparrow. Behind the beach, wind-created sand dunes and their vegetation offer some protection for wildlife. Redwinged blackbirds, song sparrows, and meadowlarks take advantage of the seeds provided by the dune vegetation. The deer mouse and the black-tailed hare forage in the coastal strand and may themselves become forage for predators such as the short-eared owl and the bobcat. Morro Bay, contiguous to the sandspit, is a stopover point for migrating waterfowl, some of which are hunted in lands adjacent to the unit.

The outlets of Hazard Canyon Creek, Islay Creek, and Coon Creek cross the beach, and the flow of freshwater provides habitat for additional flora and fauna. Numerous insects provide food for the Pacific tree frog, the long-billed marsh wren, and the black phoebe. Fish and amphibians are favored foods of the kingfisher, the great blue heron, and the black-crowned night heron, which also finds roosting cover and possibly nesting opportunities in the riparian vegetation.

The coastal scrub biotic community, vegetated by herbs and short, semi-woody shrubs, provides more food plant species and greater wildlife cover opportunities than does the coastal strand habitat. The coastal scrub provides a home for many species of birds, including the bushtit, rufous-sided towhee, scrubjays, sage sparrow, and Cooper's hawk, a rare avian predator. Three species of special concern, the Morro Bay kangaroo rat (listed both state and federally as endangered), the Morro shoulderband snail, and the Morro blue butterfly, inhabit the coastal scrub of Montana de Oro.

Coastal dune chaparral is characterized by taller, woodier evergreen shrubs. The dense vegetation provides good cover and nesting opportunities for many species of wildlife, as well as foraging and feeding opportunities. The Anna's, Allen's, and rufous hummingbirds make use of the flower nectar, while the California thrasher, California quail, wren, and brown towhee look for insects, fruits, and seeds in the bushes. Reptiles of the chaparral include the western fence lizard, gopher snake, and western rattlesnake. The brush mouse, California mouse, mule deer, gray fox, and mountain lion are some of the mammals inhabiting this biotic community.



The Morro Bay Kangaroo rat, listed both state and federally as endangered, inhabits the coastal dune scrub of Montana de Oro.

The grassland community provides abundant food of seeds and grains but little cover for wildlife. Consequently, many species feed in the grassland but use surrounding biotic communities, such as woodlands or chaparral, for shelter from the heat of the sun or from predators. Birds that make use of these resources include the western meadowlark, lark sparrow, California quail, and white-crowned sparrow. Mammals include the deer mouse, western harvest mouse, vagrant shrew, and the California ground squirrel. Reptile, bird, and mammal predators that frequent this community include the western rattlesnake, northern harrier (marsh hawk),

black-shouldered kite (white-tailed kite), burrowing owl, short-eared owl, bobcat, coyote, and the very rarely seen badger.

The riparian woodland, with its constantly available water and dense, diverse vegetation of trees, shrubs, and herbs, provides abundant food and cover (including shade and lower temperatures in the summer) to many resident wildlife species and to many visitors from other biotic communities. Bordering watercourses, the long, narrow shape of the riparian community also provides a maximum amount of "edge"

environment or ecotone (where two biotic communities meet), a particularly rich and diverse environment very important to wildlife.

The coast live oak woodland offers the food and cover resources supplied by the oak trees as well as the resources available from the understory vegetation, which can range from grassland to shrubland. The varied insects provide food for the western fence lizard and other reptiles often found in this dry environment. The Nuttall's and acorn woodpecker, band-tailed pigeon, and scrub

jay take advantage of the acorns produced by the oaks. The pocket gopher, California pocket mouse, California ground squirrel, black-tailed deer, and spotted skunk are some of the animals in this community. Many raptorial birds hunt in the oak woodland, including the northern harrier, redtail hawk, and kestrel. Mammalian predators include the gray fox, coyote, and bobcat.

Dominated by Bishop pine with a scrub understory, the closed-cone coniferous forest is found covering a small area near the southern border of Montana de Oro State Park. The trees and shrubs provide nesting and

foraging opportunities to wildlife species, such as the song sparrow, dark-eyed junco, deer mouse, and black-tailed deer. Predators of insects and higher vertebrate life include the wren-tit, Bewick's wren, brown creeper, vagrant shrew, California myotis bat, coyote, bobcat, and great horned owl.

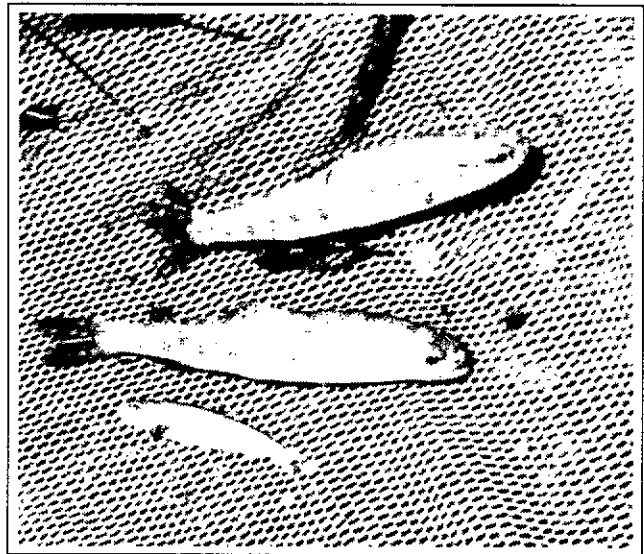
A dense eucalyptus forest occupies much of Hazard Canyon within the park. This exotic forest provides habitat for native wildlife including night roosts for turkey vultures, nest sites for raptors, a source of nectar for hummingbirds, and food and roost sites for monarch butterflies. In general, however, the diversity and number of animals in the eucalyptus forest is less than that found in the surrounding native plant communities. The eucalyptus trees are difficult to use as a food source, and alleopathic and litter effects produced by the eucalyptus inhibit the growth of understory native plants that could supply food and cover. (Several birds and mammals in Australia can eat the leaves and

blossoms, but no native California animals are known to consume eucalyptus vegetation.)

Nine state (S) or federally (F) listed rare (R), threatened (T), or endangered (E) animal species may occur in the park. The endangered American peregrine falcon (FE, SE) nests on Morro Rock and may be seen foraging in the park. A small population of and habitat for the Morro Bay kangaroo rat (FE, SE) may exist within park boundaries, and habitat enhancement projects are being conducted. The brown pelican (FE, SE) may be seen from the shore. Other listed species that have been sighted or may be seen in or from Montana de Oro State Park include the least Bell's vireo (FE, SE), California clapper rail (FE, SE), California black rail (ST), California least tern (FE, SE), bald eagle (FE, SE), and southern rubber boa (ST). The Morro shoulderband snail is a federal candidate species. Many other species, either resident and breeding or seasonal and migrant, are considered by wildlife agencies to be "of special concern." A

few of these are the Morro Bay blue butterfly, willow flycatcher, Cooper's hawk, American white pelican, common loon, double-breasted cormorant, and burrowing owl.

Both Islay and Coon Creeks support anadromous populations of steelhead.



• **Marine Life**

Montana de Oro State Park is located along a broad curve of the coastline that extends 20 miles from Point Estero south to Point Buchon. Although it is called Estero Bay, this stretch of coastline is not protected from wave action. The surf is often heavy during the winter when Pacific storms bring strong winds and waves to the coast. The tide range in the area is from approximately the minus 2-foot level to the plus 7-foot level. The tide cycle is a mixed semidiurnal type characterized by two high tides and two low tides per day. Ocean water varies by about 15°F. during the year. Water temperatures range from a low of about 51°F. in the months from February through May to a high of 64° in October.

The park includes a variety of intertidal substrates that support diverse assemblages of marine organisms. The principal substrates are: 1) sandy beach, along the ocean from Hazard Canyon to the northern boundary near the north end of the Morro Bay sandspit; 2) mudflat, along the eastern or inland edge

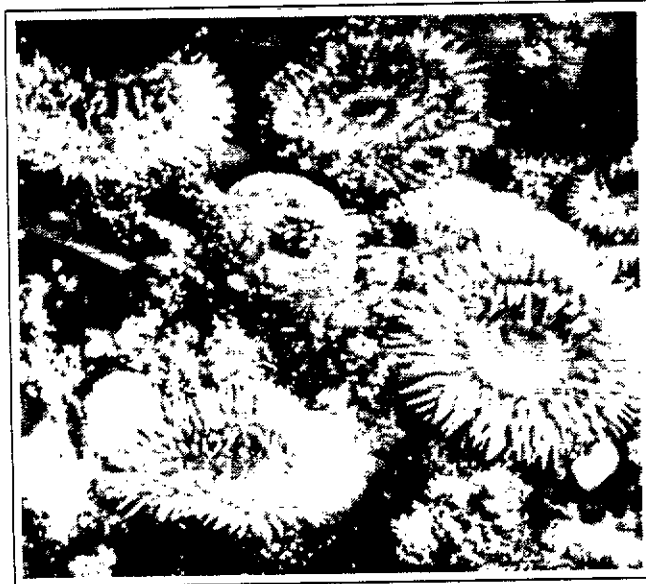
of the sandspit; and 3) rocky coastline, from Hazard Canyon south to Coon Creek. Pocket beaches occur along the area of rocky coastline.

Partly due to the variety of substrate types, Montana de Oro State Park supports an abundant and varied array of marine plants. Two hundred nine species of multicellular marine plants have been recorded at the unit. Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is the most prominent component of the mudflats bordering the east side of the sandspit

(within Morro Bay). The sandy ocean beach is not a suitable substrate for surface attachment, so few marine plants occur there. In contrast, the marine flora is very diverse along the rocky shores of the park. Some zones of the rocky intertidal are inhabited by a great mixture of marine plants with no one species dominating. *Postelsia palmiformis*, which resembles a miniature palm forest, occurs in the park. The southernmost range of this species is San Luis Obispo County.

Montana de Oro State Park abounds with tidepools, which are dominated by shallow water and intertidal sculpins. Pricklebacks, monkey-faced eels, and kelpfishes are common. Juvenile surfperches and opaleyes also occur. These groups are also common subtidally in addition to many other groups, such as the rockfishes, adult surfperches, and greenlings. Some of the more well known species in these group include the brown rockfishes, kelp rockfishes, ling cod, pile surfperches, and cabezon. The coastal creeks contain steelhead and prickly sculpins.

In offshore areas, there are seasonal occurrences of king salmon and albacore in sufficient numbers to support recreational and commercial fishing. Five species of marine mammals are regularly seen in the vicinity: harbor seals, California sea lions, stellar sea lions, southern sea otters, and Pacific gray whales. The sea otter is a federally listed threatened species. The gray whale is a federally listed endangered species.



Many tidepools are found along the unit's rocky shoreline, but, in some areas, the fragile life they support is gradually disappearing due to visitor impact.

Cultural Resources

• Archeological Sites

Four archeological surveys in Montana de Oro State Park have resulted in the identification and recording of 52 prehistoric Native American sites. These surveys in 1967, 1975, 1977, and 1986 provided reasonably complete coverage of the most sensitive areas in the park: coastal terraces, the Morro Bay sandspit, backcountry ridges, and canyon bottoms. Some work will be needed to update the inventory of recorded sites on the sandspit to contemporary standards. All the areas shown as "high allowable use intensity" were intensively surveyed in 1986 for this general plan.

Collectively, the Montana de Oro State Park archeological sites, within the territory of the Northern Chumash, have the potential for adding significantly to our knowledge of central coast prehistory. These sites include several occupation middens on coastal terraces, numerous shell middens on the Morro Bay sandspit, and a few bedrock mortar stations in the interior. Many of the sites are exposed to illegal collecting and are in areas difficult to patrol. However, few sites have been appreciably disturbed by historic land uses or development. SLO-10, under the Spooner ranch house, is the only site in the park that has been augered or test excavated. The relative lack of disturbance and effective current protection given to these sites adds to their significance.

• Standing Structures and Historic Sites

Twenty-seven historic features were recorded during the 1977 archeological survey. Most of these are closely associated with the long history of the Spooner Ranch, and most have been judged not to be historically significant.

The primary Euroamerican historic resource at Montana de Oro State Park is the structural evidence of occupation by the family of Alden B. Spooner. His agricultural operation was known as the El Pecho Ranch, named for the earlier Mexican land grant title for the area. The 10-room ranch house began as a three-room cabin, built in 1892. Over the next 20 years, additional rooms were built. The fireplace was added in the late 1940s by O. C. Field, owner between 1942 and 1954. The house is all that is left of the Spooner period of the ranch's history and today is used as a visitor center. Associated with the house are the remnants of several agricultural structures, including water tanks, sheds, and barns, and a 1910 milkhouse.

West of the ranch complex, on the south bluff of Spooner Cove, are the historic remains of a warehouse (concrete foundation), a tunnel, and a wharf. These are the remains of Spooner's Landing. In the field south of the cove is a grove of eucalyptus trees, believed to be the last site of the Pecho School. The school is associated with the Japanese tenant farmers who cultivated the terraces before World War II.

A second historic residential site exists directly north of the Spooner ranch. All the structures have been removed; exotic vegetation marks the area. This residence was part of the Spooner ranch, but of a later origin.

At the eastern end of the park, on Islay Creek, is a wood-frame barn that was associated with the Spooner family. It appears to have been built in the 1920s; it has some historic value, along with esthetic and potential recreation values.

• **Ethnographic Background**

The Native American people who inhabited the central California coast prior to the Euroamerican period were known as the Chumash. The accounts of the early Spanish explorers depict sharp contrasts between the Chumash groups along the Santa Barbara Channel and those inhabiting the territory north of Point Conception. Cabrillo commented on the number and size of the villages found along the channel and the lack of villages on the coast north of the point. Fages, a member of Portola's 1769 expedition, described the large villages found along the channel, all having populations in excess of 400, as pueblos. North of Point Conception, Fages depicted habitation sites as small or insignificant villages. The inhabitants were characterized as "very poor ill-conditioned Indians;" there is mention of a village without houses at Morro Bay.

Fages noted that the large villages along the channel had chiefs or captains (wot). The chief's primary role was that of military commander. The position was for life, and the individual had absolute, total independence. There is reference in the early Spanish accounts to only one captain or wot among all of the Northern Chumash; his name was Buchon. The Spaniards were told that Buchon, whose village was near Pismo Beach, took tribute for 20 leagues in all directions.

Based on archeological evidence and early ethnographic accounts, the Northern and Southern Chumash apparently shared similar food procurement and processing strategies. An extensive array of traps, nets, disguises, blinds, missiles and projectiles, fishing gear, and vegetable-gathering equipment was used. The wide variety of animals eaten included deer, sea mammals, bear, dog, wolf, fox, puma, skunk, raccoon, rodents, rabbit, mole, eagle, buzzard, snake, fish, and shellfish. Grinding implements, earth ovens, stone boiling in baskets, sun and smoke drying, as well as other implements and techniques, were used in food preparation.

Structures used by the Northern and Southern Chumash included ceremonial sweathouses, domed and conical buildings, and communal houses. The remains of a dwelling were excavated at Morro Bay in 1961. The structure was circular, 25 to 30 feet in diameter; archeological evidence indicates that it was dome shaped.

All of the coastal Chumash groups fished. Ethnographic accounts and faunal re-

mains from excavated sites indicate both the Northern and Channel Chumash used weir traps; dip, drag, gill, and seine nets; and hooks and lines. Hooks were made from cactus spines, shell, and bone. Spears and harpoons were also used. Both groups probably used the kelp fishery year-round. Channel Chumash, the only group to build and use the tomol (plank canoe), had access to the more seasonally available larger pelagic species, such as tuna and swordfish. Both the Channel and Northern Chumash used tule and dugout canoes.

• Historic Background

The Rancho Pecho y Islay was carved out of the Mexican coastal wilderness by Francisco Bodilla (Padilla) and Santiago Unista and granted to Francisco Bodilla in 1843. Bodilla sold the grant to John Wilson and James Scott of Santa Barbara in late 1844. Scott delivered his holdings to Wilson in 1848, retaining an interest in the Pecho y Islay. Francisco Bodilla, also of Santa Barbara, continued to live on the Pecho y Islay in an adobe cabin reputedly on the south rim of Pecho Canyon near the sea. This adobe site is south of the park on private property. Wilson lived in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Rancho Canada de los Osos, which touched the northern boundary of the Rancho Pecho y Islay. Rancho Canada de los Osos is often listed as part of the Pecho y Islay and vice versa.

Upon Wilson's death in October 1861, the land was inherited by his daughter, Ramona Hilliard, and his widow, Ramona Carrillo Wilson. There was an attempt to keep Frederick Hilliard, Ramona's husband, from having any control over the rancho. In 1863, Ramona Wilson turned over her interest to Ramona Hilliard, but attempted to establish her two sons by a previous marriage, Mariano and Romnaldo Pacheco, as trustees of the family interest. Ultimately, this issue was taken to court by the Pachecos. The Hilliards won the case and legal ownership of the rancho. In 1891, Ramona Hilliard sold the southern portion of the rancho to Luigi Marre and continued to operate the northern portion as leased land.

In 1901, Henry Cowell of San Francisco acquired a note of indebtedness on the Hilliard property and took control of the Pecho Rancho. A year later, Alden Spooner purchased the ranch from Isabel Cowell, Henry's widow.

In 1892, Alden B. Spooner, Jr. leased the land and began to develop the area now known as "Spooner Cove" as the headquarters of the El Pecho Ranch. While living in a small cabin, which is still standing, the Spooners built barns, dairy facilities, outbuildings, and other structures suitable for a diversified agriculture operation. Shortly after leasing the land, Spooner improved shipping facilities at the cove. A warehouse and a tunnel-chute with a swinging boom to load steamers were placed on the south side of the cove. The Spooners successfully farmed the land until 1942, when it was sold to O. C. Field of southern California.

Immediately north of the Spooner's El Pecho Ranch was a panhandle-shaped piece of land, which was part of the Rancho Canada de los Osos. This piece of

ground became Sections 76 and 78 when the ranch was subdivided in 1869. Ultimately, it became known as the "Barney Cole ranch," even though no legal record of a Bernard Cole could be found in county records. In 1911, A. B. Spooner purchased the 1,630-acre parcel and added it to his ranch. O. C. Field acquired all of the Spooner ranch in 1942, and when he sold a portion of the ranch to Irene McAllister, this parcel became part of the Montana de Oro ranch.

North of the Canada de los Osos boundary line and stretching to the southern arm of Morro Bay, and including the peninsula, was unclaimed, unimproved land. The area, which became known as the "Hazard Ranch" or "Hazard Canyon," was surveyed for public sale in the late 1860s. Alexander S. Hazard, one of three brothers from Rhode Island by way of the Australian gold fields, settled along the coast of San Luis Obispo County. In 1874, Hazard purchased his claim of 160 acres in upper Hazard Canyon from the U.S. Government.

Down the canyon, neighbors such as Hiram Smiley and Ora McKinney were also taking out patents on the land. Several years later, Hazard began to expand his dairy, buying out his neighbors, so that by 1887, Hazard had consolidated 1,600 acres into the Hazard Ranch. Alexander S. Hazard died in 1910, and his son, Frederick, continued the operation. Frederick died in 1925, and his sister, Mrs. Eleanor H. Maino, was appointed administrator of the estate. The ranch was leased until the early 1940s, when Oscar C. Field purchased most of the property. The northwest corner of the ranch remained in the ownership of two daughters of Alexander S. Hazard, Eleanore H. Maino and Erma Gonzales.

Hazard was a dairy farmer, but he also planted grapes and fruit trees. No physical evidence remains of this period of agriculture. What is evident are the remains of the eucalyptus plantation at Hazard Canyon, which was planted in 1908 and represents an unsuccessful economic enterprise by Alexander S. Hazard. The eucalyptus groves themselves have no historic value.

O. C. Field continued leasing both the old Spooner Ranch and the Hazard Ranch. In 1954, Field sold the middle section of the ranch to Irene Starkey McAllister who gave the unit its name: "Montana de Oro." The McAllister operation was not successful and went bankrupt. The McAllister land became Montana de Oro State Park in 1964. The Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the old Hazard Ranch from Mr. and Mrs. Field and the daughters of Alexander S. Hazard in 1970. Since that time, other small parcels have been added to the park. On January 1, 1980, the Morro Bay sandspit was transferred from Morro Bay State Park to Montana de Oro State Park for administrative reasons.

Esthetic Resources

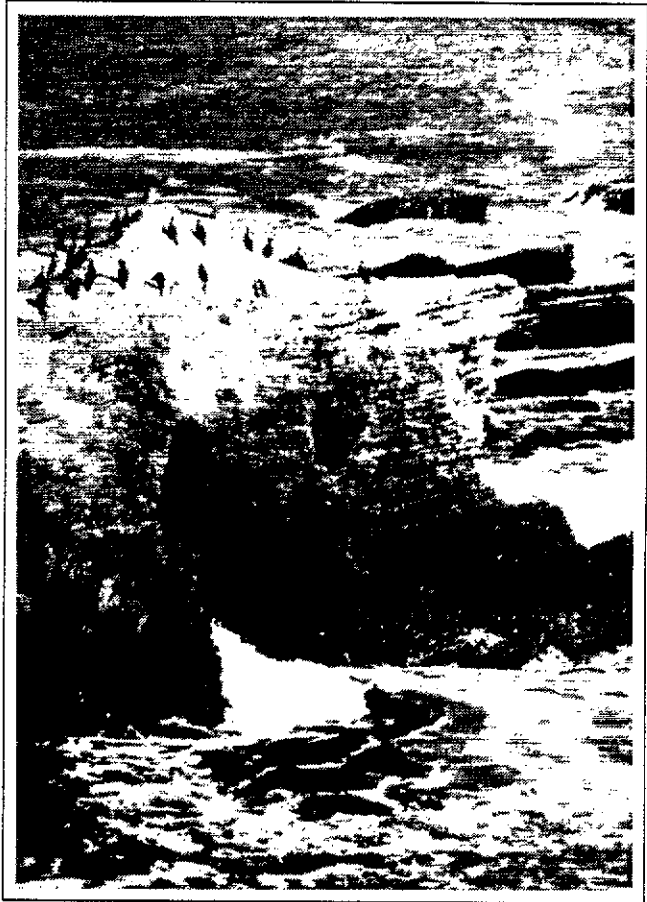
Complex topography and diverse vegetation, as well as proximity to the ocean, combine to make Montana de Oro State Park an area of rugged scenic terrain. Coastal bluffs dominate the shore and contrast with the sweep of adjacent sand dunes. Inland from the coast, the terrain rises steeply to form a portion of the San Luis Range. Valencia Peak, Oats Mountain, and Alan Peak are prominent features in the landscape.

Montana de Oro State Park is also a land of changing sound and color. The sound of the sea is pervasive and varied. Islay and Coon creeks are perennial streams, and the presence of water in the landscape contributes to the unit's scenic beauty. Seasonal wildflower displays brighten hill-sides with splashes of yellow, orange, and magenta. Sunset deepens natural colors and renders grassland areas a deep orange. When fog rolls in, sea sounds become hushed and colors become muted. The landscape becomes an ethereal wilderness.

Panoramic vistas of the surrounding terrain are found at the summits of Valencia Peak and Alan Peak. Views from the peaks and along the trails in the interior of the park provide spectacular views of a nearly pristine wilderness landscape. Trails and roads along the ocean bluffs provide expansive ocean vistas and views of the rugged San Luis Range. Areas of scenic interest include Hazard Canyon Reef and its rich tidepool communities, Spooner Cove seastacks, Corallina Cove, and Islay Creek Falls.

There are several negative visual features in the unit that disrupt the natural character of the landscape. The most prominent of these features are the quonset hut in Islay Creek, the southern boundary fence at Coon Creek, and the overhead utility line that traverses the coastal terrace.

The eucalyptus plantation in Hazard Canyon has both positive and negative visual characteristics. The aroma of eucalyptus and the appearance of the peeling bark, the blue-green leaves, and the regular



Seastacks and offshore rocks are scenic focal points of popular Spooner and Corallina Coves.

rows of trunks have a certain esthetic appeal. Eucalyptus, however, are not a component of the natural landscape. The trees block what otherwise would be long-distance views of the shoreline and the ridgelines. They are also displacing native vegetation that would be visually attractive. Since one of the management objectives in all state parks in California is to restore, protect, and maintain native environmental complexes, the eucalyptus must be considered a negative esthetic feature of Montana de Oro State Park.



Recreation Resources

The area encompassed by Montana de Oro State Park has been the site of recreational activities since the 1890s, when picnics were held at Spooner Cove.

Montana de Oro State Park was classified as a unit of the State Park System in 1965. Since that date, annual visitation has grown steadily, and average yearly visitation is 360,000. Recreation within Montana de Oro State Park centers chiefly on the unit's complex natural resources. Major activities include camping, picnicking, hiking, horseback riding, beachcombing, tidepool exploration, and nature study. The ocean and the San Luis Mountain Range provide panoramas for photography and painting. Fifty-one primitive family campsites are located at the park. Trailers and motorhomes up to 21 feet long can be accommodated, but there are no hook-ups. There are also six designated horse camps, four environmental campsites, and 15 picnic tables in the unit.

Principal constraints to recreational activities in this unit are the wildfire hazard, gusty winds on higher ridges and bluffs, rough surf and cold water temperatures, lack of potable water, and overgrown trails. Significant opportunities, however, are available for expansion of camping, picnicking, and day-use access facilities within the unit.

Beach-oriented day-use is a popular recreation activity.

Resource Policy Formulation

Classification

The classification of a State Park System unit forms the foundation on which all management and development policies are based. Classification statutes contained in Article 1.7 of the Public Resources Code specify broad management objectives and improvements appropriate in units of the State Park System.

The land acquisition process for establishment of Montana de Oro State Park began in 1965 with the acquisition of 4,481 acres. Over the years, additional lands were acquired, including the transfer of the Morro Bay sandspit from Morro Bay State Park.

In the 1960s, the present State Park System classification system was established, and in July 1965 the State Park and Recreation Commission named and classified the unit Montana de Oro State Park.

Classification by the commission brought management of the unit under the provisions of Public Resources Code Section 5019.53:

5019.53. State Parks. State parks consist of relatively spacious areas of outstanding scenic or natural character, oftentimes also containing significant historical, archaeological, ecological, geological, or other such values. The purpose of state parks shall be to preserve outstanding natural, scenic, and cultural values, indigenous aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora, and the most significant examples of such ecological regions of California as the Sierra Nevada, northeast volcanic, great valley, coastal strip, Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains, southwest mountains and valleys, redwoods, foothills and low coastal mountains, and desert and desert mountains.

Each state park shall be managed as a composite whole in order to restore, protect, and maintain its native environmental complexes to the extent compatible with the primary purpose for which the park was established.

Improvements undertaken within state parks shall be for the purpose of making the areas available for public enjoyment and education in a manner consistent with the preservation of natural, scenic, cultural, and ecological values for present and future generations. Improvements may be undertaken to provide for recreational activities including, but not limited to, camping, picnicking, sight-seeing, nature study, hiking, and horseback riding, so long as such improvements involve no major modification of land, forests, or waters. Improvements which do not directly enhance the public's enjoyment of the natural, scenic, cultural, or ecological values of the resource, which are attractions in themselves, or which are otherwise available to the public within a reasonable distance outside the park, shall not be undertaken within state parks.

State parks may be established in either the terrestrial or underwater environments of the state.

Declaration of Purpose

A declaration of purpose describes the purpose of the unit and identifies the prime resources, long-range management objectives, and the relationship between the unit's resources and recreational uses. A declaration of purpose for Montana de Oro State Park was approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission on November 17, 1965. Several changes in the declaration were approved by the Commission on June 10, 1988 to clarify the department's management goals and objectives. The original and revised declarations are as follows:

Original: Montana de Oro State Park is established to make available to the people, for their inspiration and enjoyment forever, the scenic grandeur and recreational attractions of the Central California coastline south of Morro Bay in San Luis Obispo County, together with all the scientific and historical values of this outstanding coastal region.

The function of the Division of Beaches and Parks at Montana de Oro State Park is so to manage all the resources of the park as to perpetuate them for the lasting benefit of the public in accordance with the declared purpose of the park; to interpret them fully and effectively; and to provide such facilities and services, consistent with the purpose of the park, as are necessary for the full enjoyment and safe use of the area by visitors.

Revised: The purpose of Montana de Oro State Park is to perpetuate forever, for public use, inspiration, esthetic enjoyment, and education, an area along the central California coast of unique natural beauty and scientific significance, including a diverse mosaic of native vegetation, scenic uplands, rocky shorelines, sandy beaches, wildlife, and archeological resources. All scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources shall be managed as a whole, preserving and restoring the natural character of the park in accordance with ecological principles.

The function of the California Department of Parks and Recreation at Montana de Oro State Park is to manage the unit's varied, interdependent resources in order to ensure the perpetuation of its diverse environmental complexes and wilderness values; to interpret them effectively; and to provide, consistent with perpetuation of park resources, such facilities and services as are necessary for the public's enjoyment of the unit.

Zone of Primary Interest

The zone of primary interest is that area outside the unit in which land-use changes could adversely impact the resources of Montana de Oro State Park. This area includes the adjacent community of Los Osos, the upper watersheds of Hazard, Islay, and Coon creeks, and the adjacent offshore and bay areas.

In addition, the department should be concerned about activities on all lands, no matter how far from the unit, that can, through their development and use, adversely affect the resources and features within the unit. Air pollution generated by the Morro Bay and Diablo Canyon power plants, oil spills either in the bay or offshore, discharge of sewage effluent in the bay or into one of the creeks that traverse the park, and pollution from other sources all potentially could affect Montana de Oro State Park. Alteration of inland surface water flow or the development of both offshore and onshore protective structures could alter the available sand supply to the beach, potentially resulting in a permanent or progressive loss of beach sand. Department officials should be aware of these potential threats and take action whenever possible to minimize them.

Resource Management Policies

Resource management in the State Park System is governed by laws contained in the Public Resources Code, by regulations in the California Administrative Code, by directives approved by the department's director, and by policies approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission. General policies related to the unit classification and the declaration of purpose have been addressed in previous sections.

Specific departmental resource management directives amplify the legal codes and provide more specific management guidelines. Directives that are pertinent to existing or potential problems related to the management of resources within Montana de Oro State Park are:

- #4 Acquisition Objectives
- #5 Development in State Parks
- #33 Exotic Plants - Landscaping
- #34 Exotic Plants - Elimination
- #35 Wildlife Protection
- #46 Environmental Quality
- #58 Cultural Resource Protection
- #59 Underground Work
- #70 Archeological Sites

Directives #58, #59, #33, and #34 are particularly relevant to planning issues for Montana de Oro State Park. (See Appendix B for Directives 4, 5, 35, 46, and 70).

Directive:

33. Exotic plant species capable of naturalizing in California will never be introduced as landscaping in units of the State Park System. Such species now established should be replaced by natives or noninvading species.

34. Except in those areas where it is perpetuated for resource management or historical reasons, aggressively invading exotic vegetation will be systematically removed when it becomes established anywhere in the State Park System; first priority in the effort will be given to invasions in state parks, state reserves, natural preserves, and wildernesses.

58. Cultural resources in the State Park System shall be protected against damaging or degrading influences, including deterioration or adverse modification of their environments. All evidence of such resources shall be investigated by qualified personnel, as designated by the director, before any restoration, reconstruction, or development is begun. If stabilization of cultural remains is required to prevent loss or deterioration, it shall be undertaken in ways that shall not threaten archeological, historical, or related environmental values.



Spooner Cove is subject to inundation after heavy storms.

59. No underground work, whether original or maintenance, may be undertaken in the State Park System until clearance is given by a department archeologist. Emergency work required to protect the public health and safety may be undertaken without prior clearance, provided concurrent notice of the crisis is made to a department archeologist.

Following several years of significant storm damage in many coastal State Park System units, the department adopted a policy for coastal erosion on October 24, 1984. The intent of the policy is to avoid construction of new permanent facilities in areas subject to coastal erosion unless the risk of loss is clearly offset by the need for the facility, and to promote the use of expendable or movable facilities in erosion-prone areas. The policy reads as follows:

The Department of Parks and Recreation shall avoid construction of new structures and coastal facilities in areas subject to ocean wave erosion, seaciff retreat, and unstable cliffs, unless specific determinations have been made that the risk of loss of the facility is clearly offset by the investment and need for the facility. Measures shall be taken to minimize human-induced erosion by reducing: concentrated surface runoff from use areas, elevated groundwater levels from irrigation and urbanization, and surface disturbance of blufftop soils. In recognition of California's actively eroding coastline, new structures and facilities located in areas known to be subject to ocean wave erosion, seaciff retreat, or unstable bluffs shall be expendable or movable. Structural protection and re-protection of developments shall be allowed only when the cost of protection is commensurate with the value (physical and intrinsic) of the development to be protected, and when it can be shown that the protection will not negatively affect the beach of the near-shore environment.

In addition to systemwide policies, specific policies that pertain to existing or potential resource issues or problems have been formulated for Montana de Oro State Park and are given below by major subject.

• **Hydrologic Resources**

Water features are important to the perpetuation of the natural and esthetic values at Montana de Oro State Park. Any significant alteration of the hydrologic systems supporting these water features, either inside or outside the unit, may affect them significantly. Issues of potential concern include stream channelization, diversion, or pollution upstream from the park.

Policy: *The department shall identify and monitor activities or proposed land use changes on adjacent lands that may have adverse impacts on the water features of Montana de Oro State Park. Measures to maintain water quality, channel flow, and sedimentation rates shall be recommended and implemented. No water shall be diverted within unit boundaries that will significantly affect the water features and the ecosystems they support.*

• **Acquisition of Watersheds**

The upland areas of Montana de Oro State Park include portions of three watersheds: Hazard Canyon, Islay Canyon, and Coon Canyon. The upper portion of each watershed is outside park boundaries. A basic concept of wildland management is that it is desirable to manage entire watersheds as ecological units. Land use practices upstream can affect water quality in streams and groundwater in the lower watersheds. Since watershed boundaries usually coincide with ridgelines, acquisition of watersheds usually protects viewsheds so that unsightly developments on adjacent private land would not be visible from the interior of the park. Ownership of entire watersheds also facilitates resource management activities including wildland fire suppression planning, prescribed fire management, and wildlife management.

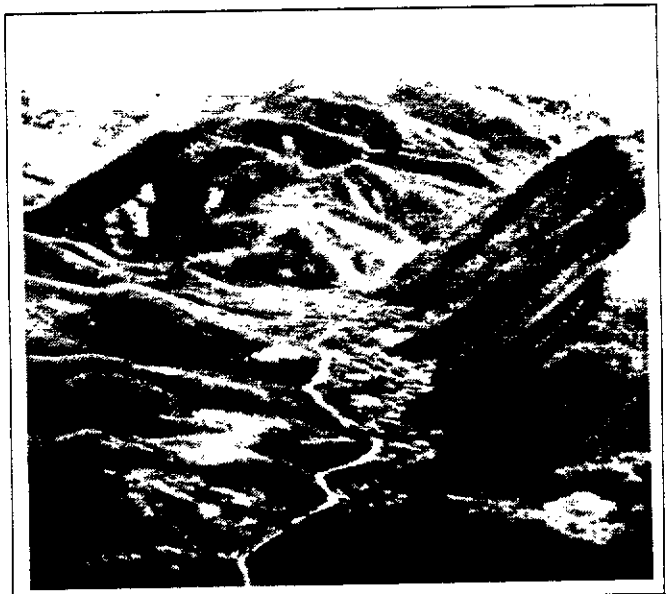
Islay Canyon. It is desirable to manage entire watersheds as ecological units.

Policy: *If upper watershed lands within the Hazard, Islay, and Coon Creek drainages become available for purchase, the department shall consider acquiring these properties as additions to Montana de Oro State Park.*

• **Geologic Hazards**

Geologic hazards at Montana de Oro State Park include landslides, blockfalls, liquefaction, tsunamis, and seismic shaking. Site-specific investigations prior to new developments can help to avoid building in areas subject to these hazards.

Policy: *New developments shall avoid geologically hazardous areas. If facilities are needed in geologically hazardous areas and no feasible alternative locations exist, a site-specific geologic report shall be prepared in advance of final working drawings in order to evaluate the geologic conditions that would affect the proposed facilities.*



• Coastal Erosion

The seacliffs and beaches of Montana de Oro are subject to coastal erosion, seacliff retreat, and beach sand loss. Since no facilities are threatened by this natural process, the landform changes and cycles of beach creation and destruction are compatible with the development, use, and appreciation of the park.

Policy: *All future permanent facility developments along blufftops shall be sufficiently set back to ensure that the development will endure. New developments shall be sited and designed to neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion or geologic instability.*

Development shall not be permitted on the cliff face except for engineered staircases or accessways to provide public access to designated public use areas. These access structures shall be designed to minimize the alteration of the bluff and beach.

• Paleontological Resources

The sedimentary strata at Montana de Oro State Park are of marine origin and contain some very rare invertebrate fossil resources. Several fossil locations within the park have been described by UCLA paleontologists, and new discoveries could be made at virtually any place in the unit. Carbonized wood has been observed weathering out of the seacliffs at Corallina Cove. Fossil resources are of scientific and interpretive interest and can be lost due to erosion, facilities development, overcollection, or weathering.

Policy: *Mapped fossil localities shall be protected from unauthorized collection. Efforts shall be made to educate the public and enlist volunteer support in the preservation of the rare fossil resources. If new discoveries occur, their significance shall be determined and the appropriate protective or stabilization action taken.*

Since irreplaceable fossil resources may be impacted by surface-disturbing developments, such as trail construction, the department shall consult with a qualified paleontologist during the planning and construction of new surface-disturbing facilities. The purpose of this consultation shall be to assure proper steps are taken to avoid or to record and recover significant fossil resources.

• Soil Constraints

Some of the soils of Montana de Oro State Park are poorly suited to the development of recreation facilities, buildings, and roads. The Soil Conservation Service soil survey of the coastal part of San Luis Obispo County indicates that the soils present in the unit have the following constraints: slope, shallow depth of rock, easily erodible, too sandy, and a high shrink/swell potential or low strength. Some soils have slow permeability and are poor filters, limiting the ability to leach septic tank effluent. Other soils exhibit seepage and piping (the formation of subsurface cavities by water moving through the soil, which undermines its strength). Problems with reclamation and difficulties in revegetation and erosion control have been identified for areas within the park.

Policy: *Soil characteristics shall be considered in the design and location of facilities. Soil loss due to erosion caused by facility development, visitor use, and unit operation and maintenance shall be monitored. Projects shall be implemented when necessary to prevent soil losses and restore soil integrity.*

• Soil Erosion

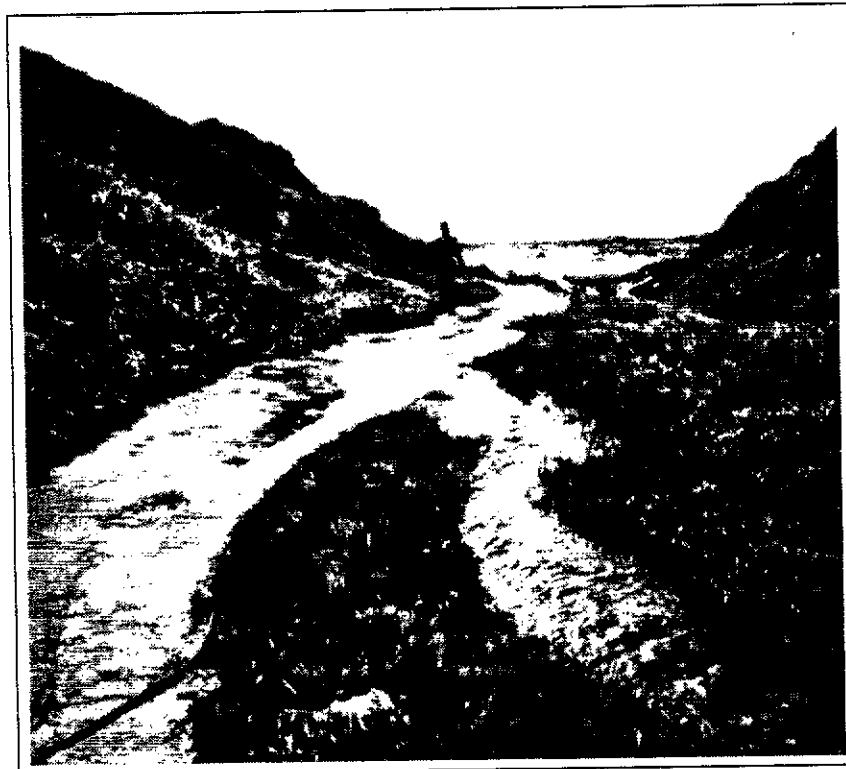
Trails, roads, streambanks, and hillsides at Montana de Oro State Park are all eroding. As modifications to the natural system are introduced or as visitor use increases, erosion could accelerate and cause damage. Some of the trails and roads now in the park were constructed without adequately considering or implementing methods for preventing erosion. It may be necessary to manage those areas most severely eroded and to include soil erosion considerations in future plans for development and use.

Policy: *The department shall endeavor to minimize human-caused erosion at Montana de Oro State Park. Unnatural or destructive erosion shall be controlled and prevented by means that are consistent with the purposes of the park and with department policies. Steps shall be taken to correct existing erosion problems and eroded areas. These areas shall be identified, restored to natural contours if possible, and revegetated with appropriate native plant species when necessary. Where correction is necessary, all measures used shall be as unobtrusive as possible, fitting naturally into the environment, with the objective of restoring the natural condition.*

Concentrated visitor use in riparian zones has resulted in vegetation trampling and obliteration and soil erosion and compaction.

• Riparian Zones

The term wetland refers to any watercourse or body of water, the lands underlying or adjacent to these waters, and the wildlife and natural communities dependent on the wetland habitat (California Administrative Code, Section 5812). With their diversity of plant and animal life, wetland areas are important esthetic and recreational resources. As defined, riparian zones are classified as a type of wetland. In recognizing the significance of wetland ecosystems, the Public Resources Code (Sec. 5812) requires that the department "give particular recognition to opportunities for protecting and preserving wetlands lying within, or adjacent to, existing units of the State Park System..."



At Montana de Oro State Park, concentrated visitor use in riparian zones has resulted in vegetation trampling and obliteration and soil erosion and compaction. Within Hazard Canyon, eucalyptus has displaced habitat for native riparian plant species.

Policy: *The integrity of riparian ecosystems within Montana de Oro State Park shall be protected from any activity that results in significant loss of native vegetation or prevents development of a multilayered community structure. Degraded riparian areas, including areas where eucalyptus has displaced native species, will be restored to a more natural condition.*

• Vegetation Management

It is a policy of the department to preserve and perpetuate representative examples of natural plant communities (Policy No. 7; Res. Mgt. Directives, 1831.1). The natural plant communities at Montana de Oro State Park have been impacted by urbanization, road construction, and invasion by exotic species. The net results of such impacts include changes in the range and distribution of native species.

Policy: *The department shall develop and implement a plant community restoration and management plan for Montana de Oro State Park. The primary objective of this program shall be to manage toward a natural condition with a minimum of disruption to natural processes. The secondary objective shall be to restore and perpetuate the native plant communities that prevailed in the unit prior to Euroamerican influence.*

• Oak Management

Through grazing pressures, habitat modification, and fire suppression, oaks in California have experienced a very low rate of regeneration. Most oak woodland/forest areas display a loss of natural age structure that typically exhibits a variety of different age classes. A plant community composed of even-aged individuals is considered to be an unstable community, especially when limited to the older age classes, as is found among the oaks in the unit. Little regeneration from seed has been noted in the unit's oak woodlands and forests.

Policy: *To ensure the protection and perpetuation of the native oaks of Montana de Oro State Park, the oak forest communities shall be managed to promote an increased representation of the younger age classes of the oaks. An oak monitoring program shall be established to determine annual recruitment and mortality of oaks and current age class representation.*

• Native Grasslands

Extensive changes in the grassland have occurred as a result of long-term grazing, fire suppression, and the introduction of nonnative species. Large areas of native grasslands are not now found within Montana de Oro State Park. Species that characterize native grassland — purple needlegrass, pine bluegrass, and small-flowered melic — occur throughout the unit but are not extensive.

Under natural conditions, the density of native bunchgrasses is variable. When sparse, numerous annual species are commonly associated with the bunchgrasses. In the grassland, these species include goldfields, bird's-eye Gilia, popcorn flower, brodiaea, mariposa lily, and members of the carrot family.

Policy: *Native grassland sites at Montana de Oro State Park shall be managed to restore and maintain the diversity and integrity of native grasslands. Efforts shall include field surveys to identify and assess populations of native grasses, the control and/or eradication of exotic species, and the restoration of fire to its natural role in the ecosystem.*



A monitoring program will be established at Montana de Oro to ensure the protection and perpetuation of native oaks.

• **Prescribed Fire**

Prior to the 1900s, fires burned regularly throughout Montana de Oro State Park and its vicinity. The fires were most often ignited by lightning in the late summer and early fall and by the intentional or accidental activities of Native Americans and ranchers. Wildfires began to be effectively suppressed in the early 1920s, and since that time fire has only infrequently burned throughout the unit. Disruption of natural fire processes has resulted in ecological imbalances and the increased likelihood of destructive wildfires due to fuel accumulation. Reintroducing fire through a carefully controlled prescribed fire program is needed to maintain native plant species and plant communities that developed under a regime of frequent fires, to restore the ecological processes occurring in the park to a more natural status, and to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfires.

The first prescribed fire for ecological management purposes in the State Park System was conducted at Montana de Oro State Park in June 1973. Thirty-five acres of coastal terrace grassland were burned in an effort to restore native grassland species to the site.

Policy: *Fire shall be restored to its natural role in Montana de Oro State Park ecosystems in accord with departmental prescribed fire management policies. An ongoing Prescribed Fire Management Program shall be established and maintained.*

• **Fire Prevention and Suppression**

Wildfire can be a threat to natural resources, facilities, and human life and property. A Prescribed Fire Management Program that simulates the historic natural fires of this region will reduce the damage from future wildfires but cannot eliminate the threat of destructive wildfires during fire weather conditions and from human causes. For these reasons, the department requires that a Wildfire Management Plan be developed for every State Park System unit that experiences wildland fires.

Because conventional fire control activities and procedures can result in more serious and long-lasting impacts on park resources than the wildfire itself, the development of special standards and procedures applicable to the park environment is important.

Undesirable effects of suppression activities can be avoided by using a planned program of modified fire suppression. This program divides the park into compartments bordered by existing natural and artificial firebreaks. In the event of a wildfire, suppression activities are concentrated along the borders of a compartment, thereby minimizing resource damage. The program would also identify resource sensitivities of the park to be considered should additional suppression activities be required. Wildfire contingency planning in this manner will greatly reduce the likelihood of damage from suppression activities while providing for the necessary protection of park resources and public safety.

Policy: *The department shall work with the California Department of Forestry and other appropriate agencies to implement a Wildfire Management Plan at Montana de Oro State Park. This plan shall address all aspects of wildfire planning, including prevention, pre-suppression, and suppression. The plan shall identify modified fire suppression methods designed to preserve sensitive park resources while protecting human lives and facilities.*

- **Rare and Endangered Plants**

Sixteen rare or endangered plant species have been identified at Montana de Oro State Park. Although populations of several species have been accurately located, site-specific information for the majority of these sensitive plants is lacking. As a result, rare or endangered plants can be inadvertently destroyed by facility development, maintenance programs, visitor use, or other activities.

Policy: *Rare and endangered plants in Montana de Oro State Park that are on official state, federal, and California Native Plant Society lists shall be protected and managed for their perpetuation.*

Systematic surveys for rare and endangered plants shall be made wherever facility development, resource management, or increased visitor use is proposed. Populations shall be mapped, management plans for their protection and perpetuation shall be developed, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate unavoidable impacts.

- **Landscaping**

Exotic species detract from the natural appearance of Montana de Oro State Park. Exotic species frequently have lower habitat value for native wildlife and can become naturalized and displace native plant species. For example, eucalyptus and nasturtium are established in Islay Creek. Exotics frequently require permanent irrigation and can be more susceptible to insect attack and disease than native species.

Policy: *Landscaping in developed areas shall consist of species indigenous to the unit. If exotic species are used, these shall be species that are incapable of naturalizing in the wild and do not require a permanent irrigation system.*



The plan calls for the protection and management of rare and endangered plants in Montana de Oro, including the Morro Bay manzanita (Arctostaphylos morroensis).

- **Exotic Plant Species**

Many exotic species have become naturalized within Montana de Oro State Park; for example, in Hazard Canyon (eucalyptus), in areas previously farmed (mustard), and in areas subjected to grazing pressures (annual grasses). In many areas, they are successfully competing with native species. Perpetuation of native plant communities depends on the control and removal of exotic plants.

Policy: *The department shall pursue a long-range objective of controlling, or eradicating where possible, exotic plants that have become established in the unit. Highest priority shall be given to those species most invasive and conspicuous in the landscape. Exception shall be made for the specimen Monterey cypress trees planted in the vicinity of the historic Spooner ranch house. An important element of long-range exotic species control and eradication programs shall be an active revegetation program using species native to the unit or the immediate area.*

• Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus globulus, or blue gum, was first introduced to California by 1853; by 1870, it was being planted for commercial purposes. Although the tree is not useful as timber, it was and still is grown for fuel, windbreaks, pulp, and ornamental landscaping. *Eucalyptus globulus* is adapted to a wide range of substrates and reaches its best development on moderately fertile loams or heavy but well-drained soils. It is well adapted to areas with an annual rainfall of 24-44 inches. Fog is also an important source of water for blue gum. In areas with summer drought, its extensive root system is able to extract water from the soil even though other plants may not be able to do so. Toxins present in the leaves of eucalyptus are leached into the soil by fog and rain and inhibit the growth of understory vegetation. Because of the relatively sterile understory and the limited value of eucalyptus as a source of forage, eucalyptus generally provide poor habitat for native wildlife. Monarch butterflies are one of the few native wildlife species that have adapted well to the dense eucalyptus forests.

Eucalyptus was planted in Hazard Canyon in the early 1900s. The plantation covers approximately 200 acres. The eucalyptus forest occupies sites that originally supported coastal scrub, oak woodland, and riparian forest communities. Prior to the planting of eucalyptus and establishment of the state park, native trees in the area were cut for firewood. This may explain why there are relatively few native trees in Hazard Canyon today. Based on preliminary soil analysis and other site characteristics, much of the existing eucalyptus stand could be returned to native tree species, including sycamore, California bay, willow, cottonwood, and Bishop pine.

Spectacular downcoast vistas are available from several locations along the main park road. In Hazard Canyon, however, the extensive groves of eucalyptus trees obscure coastal and inland views. The serried rows of trees impose an unnatural form on the natural landscape and create an area of relatively low visual diversity.

Some park visitors find the eucalyptus forest a desirable setting for recreation activities and a positive scenic resource in itself. They perceive the eucalyptus forest as providing shade, wind protection, screening between use areas, and a visual contrast to surrounding vegetation. However, one of the primary objectives for establishment of the state park was to preserve and to present as a living museum an example of the primitive natural landscape along this portion of the central California coastline. The integrity of this objective is jeopardized by the presence of these planted trees.

Except in areas where it is perpetuated for special management purposes, it is a department directive to systematically remove aggressively invading exotic vegetation. First priority in this effort is given to state parks, state reserves, natural preserves, and wildernesses (Paragraph 34, Section 1831.1). Wildlife resources depend on native vegetation. It is also a department directive to maintain the natural faunal habitat wherever possible (Paragraph 35, Section 1831.2).



Within Hazard Canyon, eucalyptus has displaced habitat of native riparian plant species. These eucalyptus will be removed and natural plant communities reestablished.

Policy: *The existing eucalyptus containment program aimed at controlling the spread of eucalyptus from the original plantations should continue. These efforts are needed to maintain the eucalyptus plantations within their original planted boundaries.*

Studies shall be conducted to determine which plant communities were indigenous to the sites now occupied by eucalyptus plantations. Additional field investigations shall also be conducted to determine if any of the eucalyptus provides important habitat for the monarch butterfly.

Based upon the results of these and other studies, an interim management program shall be developed. The objectives of this program shall be to:

- 1. Provide for the perpetuation of any habitat found to be important to monarchs.*
- 2. Restore the native plant communities within the riparian zone.*
- 3. Initiate trial restoration efforts involving the removal of not more than a total of 16 acres of original plantation trees. Three to five trial sites shall be selected to evaluate different site characteristics and restoration methods. No site shall be over 5 acres in size.*

The interim program shall include an environmental assessment of the proposed action and shall be subject to review through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the coastal development permit process.

Based upon the evaluation of the interim program, a long-term plan shall be developed for managing the eucalyptus plantations and restoring areas to native vegetation. The long-term plan shall also be subject to CEQA and coastal development permit review processes.



The sensitive ecological values of the Morro Bay sandspit can be protected through designation of the area as a natural preserve.

- **Morro Bay Sandspit**

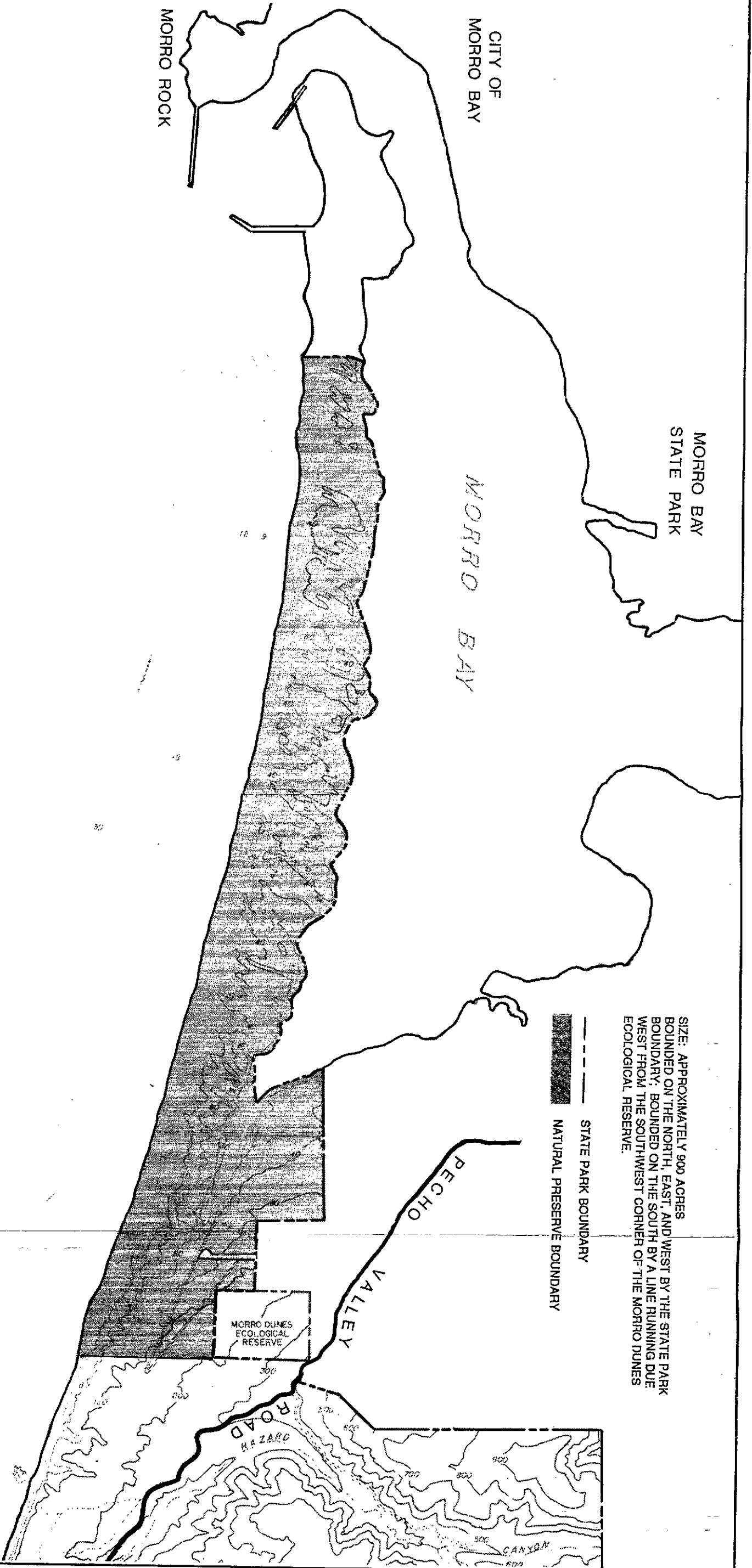
The Morro Bay sandspit is an ecologically diverse area and represents a unique barrier dune complex separating Morro Bay from the Pacific Ocean. The sandspit forms the northern extension of Montana de Oro State Park. Within unit boundaries, the sandspit is approximately four miles long; dunes reach 100 feet in height. The sands that form the dune complex are wind-driven and derived from sedimentary, igneous, and alluvial parent materials. Dune vegetation illustrates plant succession from pioneer to climax dune communities. Deflation and freshwater seepage areas on the inland face of the dunes support freshwater fish species. Several sensitive plant species occur in the dune complex, including salt marsh birdsbeak (state, federal endangered), pholisma, beach spectacle pod, and hybrids derived from three species of sand verbena.

The diversity of vegetation provides potential habitat for numerous wildlife species, including two sensitive species — the Morro shoulderband snail and the Morro Bay kangaroo rat (state and federal endangered). Potential nesting habitat exists for the least tern.

MORRO DUNES NATURAL PRESERVE

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION



SIZE: APPROXIMATELY 900 ACRES
BOUNDED ON THE NORTH, EAST, AND WEST BY THE STATE PARK BOUNDARY; BOUNDED ON THE SOUTH BY A LINE RUNNING DUE WEST FROM THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE MORRO DUNES ECOLOGICAL RESERVE.

STATE PARK BOUNDARY
NATURAL PRESERVE BOUNDARY

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK
MORRO DUNES NATURAL PRESERVE
GENERAL PLAN - RESOURCE ELEMENT

RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

APPROVED _____ DATE _____

REVISIONS

DATE

DESIGNED

DRAWN

CHECKED

DRAWING NO.

MAP

3

Policy: *The Morro Bay barrier dune complex at Montana de Oro State Park shall be considered for designation as a natural preserve. Upon closure of Army Road and completion of an alternative beach access road and parking area, the endangered species protection zone identified in the Land Use Plan shall be included in the natural preserve.*

Human activities on the dunes need to be controlled to prevent destruction of vegetation; attempts will be made to revegetate destabilized dunes.



• Coastal Dune Management

Dune systems are composed of unconsolidated sand that has been transported by strong onshore winds. Natural dune systems consist of several stages of dune development that range from embryonic foredunes to rear dunes. Dunes are initially stabilized by low-growing plants adapted to moving sand. With sufficient stabilization, woody species can become established. Typically, once vegetation is removed, a dune blowout occurs, and natural revegetation of the blowout may not

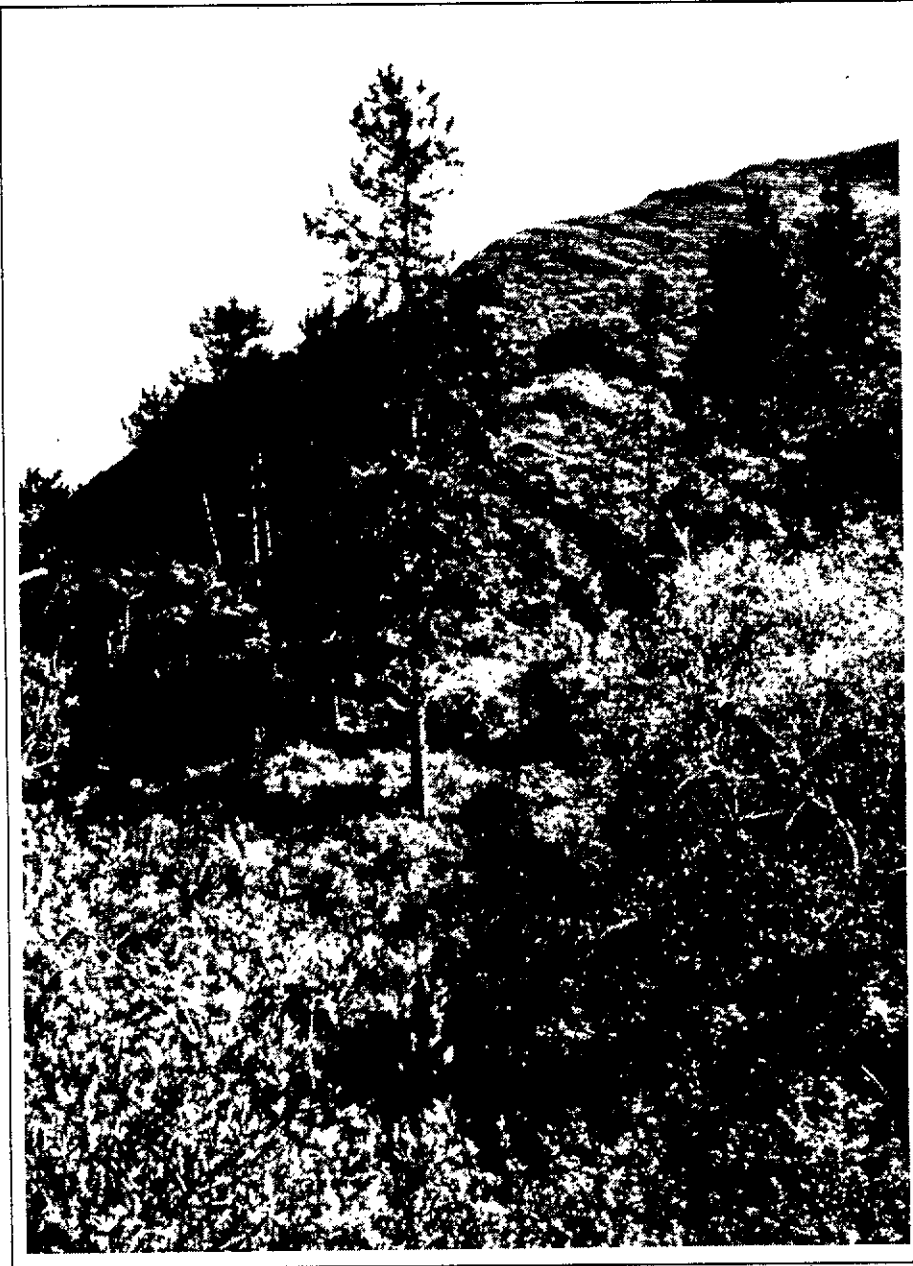
occur. Human activities in sand dunes can destroy vegetation and destabilize the dunes. Ongoing human use of a blowout area renders natural revegetation virtually impossible.

Coastal dunes provide important habitats for many often endemic species of plants and animals. The use of coastal zones for residential, agricultural, and industrial purposes has degraded or destroyed a large portion of native dune habitat in California. Heavy recreational use of coastal lands has also resulted in the degradation of dune habitat in many areas.

Most of the remaining natural dune environment in the Morro Bay area is within units of the State Park System. The continued existence of coastal dunes and of the species associated with them depends on the effective stewardship of the coastal dune resource.

Policy: *Human activities on the dunes at Montana de Oro State Park shall be regulated to prevent destruction of the natural dune environment.*

Hiking, horseback riding, hang-gliding, and other recreational uses shall be restricted to designated areas and routes. The use of walkways, sand ladders, and inconspicuous fencing shall be considered. Destabilized dunes shall be revegetated with species indigenous to the unit.



Special management techniques such as a prescribed fire program may be necessary to ensure the perpetuation of the Bishop pine forest in Montana de Oro.

• Bishop Pine

Bishop pine occurs at several locations along the coast of California from Humboldt to Santa Barbara County. The largest concentrations of this species occur in Mendocino, Sonoma, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties. Bishop pine exists in a maritime climate; fog and fog drip supply moisture during dry summer periods.

Bishop pine commonly grows in dense stands on north-facing slopes. The species with which it is associated include madrone, sword fern, and huckleberry. Bishop pine is restricted to shallow, acid, and poorly drained soils. In San Luis Obispo County, Bishop pine is found on diatomaceous shale.

Stands of Bishop pine are usually even-aged and reproduce following fire. Bishop pine cones remain closed until exposed to the heat of fire. Stand size can fluctuate from one fire to another. In the

absence of fire, Bishop pines become susceptible to disease and die without reproducing. These trees seldom live longer than 80 years.

Policy: *The Bishop pine forest in Montana de Oro State Park shall be managed to ensure perpetuation of this community. Because bishop pine has evolved under a regime of periodic fire, a prescribed fire program shall be undertaken to help ensure the long-term survival of the species in the park.*

• **Livestock Grazing**

Livestock grazing is inconsistent with State Park System management objectives of promoting natural processes and restoring natural ecosystems. Livestock grazing impacts native grasslands, pollutes surface waters, and detracts from esthetic features with the necessary installation of cross-fencing, watering troughs, and tanks. Recreational experiences are restricted in areas where cattle congregate. In recognition of these negative impacts, the department terminated livestock grazing in Montana de Oro State Park shortly after the unit became part of the State Park System.

Policy: *Livestock grazing in Montana de Oro State Park shall continue to be prohibited.*

• **Dune Revegetation**

The dunes on the Morro Bay sandspit are components of a dynamic system. With the exception of several large areas of moving sand, the eastern face of the dune system is largely vegetated. The presumption has been made that the bare sand areas are the result of past human disturbances. It is now believed that these are natural features of the dune system. Comparison of 1945 aerial photographs to those flown in 1978 shows that the eastern "toes" of some blowouts have been denuded of vegetation; other areas have naturally revegetated. Some sites do not appear to have been vegetated during historic times.

Policy: *Revegetation on the Morro Bay sandspit shall be limited to areas in which a historic loss of vegetation can be documented. Extensive revegetation of natural blowouts shall not be done unless the moving sand in these areas constitutes a threat to adjacent resources or facilities.*

• **Wildlife Management**

Animal life is an important part of natural ecosystems and adds interest and variety to the park experience. Protection and perpetuation of natural wildlife populations are major management objectives at Montana de Oro State Park.

Policy: *Altered natural habitats shall be restored as nearly as possible to conditions that would exist had natural ecological processes not been disrupted. Whether or not restoration of natural conditions is possible, it shall be the policy of the department to avoid significant imbalances caused by human influences on the natural wildlife populations. If it is necessary to regulate animal populations, the methods used shall be based on sound principles of ecosystem management, shall be consistent with the general policies of the department, and shall avoid disturbance to other natural values of the park.*

• Waterfowl Hunting

Within the State Park System, hunting is allowed only in certain state recreation areas. It is otherwise prohibited on all State Park System lands. The black brant goose is a game bird drawn to Morro Bay by the eelgrass, its favored food, and has been traditionally hunted in the bay for many years. Waterfowl hunting is allowed on state-owned lands that lie adjacent to the boundaries of Montana de Oro State Park. Because park boundary lines are often unclear and difficult to determine in the field, the public often inappropriately hunts from or near State Park System property. Such a use of State Park System property is inconsistent with the unit's classification as a state park (Title 14, Chapter 1, Section 4305) and poses a possible threat to public safety.

Policy: *The department shall work with the California Department of Fish and Game to regulate hunting adjacent to Montana de Oro State Park to minimize any impacts on State Park System resources.*

• Wildlife Requiring Special Management Consideration

Nine federal or state-listed rare, threatened, or endangered animal species may occur in Montana de Oro State Park or may frequent the vicinity. These species include the Morro Bay kangaroo rat, American peregrine falcon, bald eagle, California least tern, least Bell's vireo, California black rail, California clapper rail, and possibly the southern rubber boa. Three additional listed species may be observed from the unit — the brown pelican, the southern sea otter, and the gray whale.

Many animal species of special concern occur within Montana de Oro State Park. These species are of concern to the California Department of Fish and Game due to a statewide reduction in breeding populations, suitable habitat, or other threats to the populations. Other species are of special scientific, interpretive, or educational interest. Some of these species are the Morro shoulderband snail, Morro blue butterfly, monarch butterfly, northern harrier, osprey, burrowing owl, snowy plover, willow flycatcher, and yellow warbler. More species of special concern may be observed from the unit, including the common loon, double-crested cormorant, California gull, and elegant tern.

Policy: *Specific management programs shall be developed when appropriate for animal species that are rare, threatened, endangered, or of special concern. Necessary and suitable habitat, where it exists, shall be perpetuated. Programs or projects undertaken at Montana de Oro State Park shall be planned and designed so that animal life requiring special management consideration will not be adversely affected. Resource management actions shall focus on natural processes, in recognition that natural processes are mutually beneficial to all important resources.*


• **Morro Bay Kangaroo Rat**

The Morro Bay kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys heermanni morroensis*) is listed as an endangered mammal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game, and is also listed in the International Red Data Book for mammals. This unique subspecies occurs within a restricted range on the south side of Morro Bay, and the survival of the species is endangered by continuing modification and destruction of its habitat. The population has been reduced to fewer than 350 individuals occupying several small isolated areas of suitable habitat. The original range has decreased, due to urban development or natural plant succession, resulting in mature coastal scrub vegetation too dense and closed for suitable kangaroo rat habitat. The Morro Bay kangaroo rat requires open, sandy areas beneath low coastal scrub vegetation. The mature scrub provides fewer den sites, fewer food plant species, and impedes their leaping mode of escape from predators. Feral house cats from nearby urban developments exert pressure on the remnant kangaroo rat populations, and human disturbance, such as burrow destruction through foot, equestrian, off-road vehicle, and road traffic, is yet another threat to its survival.

Recovery efforts for the Morro Bay kangaroo rat have been conducted by the department, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and state Fish and Game. These efforts include the development of the Morro Bay Kangaroo Rat Recovery Plan, the establishment of the Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve, habitat rehabilitation activities, such as hand-clearing and controlled burning of the mature coastal scrub, and the initiation of a captive breeding program to produce animals for reintroduction into areas of rehabilitated habitat within their former range.

Habitat rehabilitation activities have been conducted south of the sandspit and adjacent to Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve in Montana de Oro State Park. An area on the bluff between Hazard Canyon and Spooner Cove, the Hazard Area, has been proposed as a site for habitat rehabilitation and reintroduction of the Morro Bay kangaroo rat.

**Habitat
Restoration
Project**



This area is crucial to the survival of the endangered Morro Bay Kangaroo Rat. Fifty years ago, Kangaroo Rats occurred throughout the southern Morro Bay region. Today, only a few populations remain, primarily as a result of habitat loss.

A habitat management program is underway in this area to improve conditions and restore Kangaroo Rat populations. This is an interagency project involving the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Fish and Game, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Efforts to rehabilitate habitat and reintroduce the Morro Bay kangaroo rat will continue in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.

Policy: *The department shall work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to implement the Morro Bay Kangaroo Rat Recovery Plan, including acquisition and protection of kangaroo rat habitat, habitat rehabilitation, and the captive breeding program. The department shall conduct a thorough survey of potential kangaroo rat habitat within the unit to assess its suitability for possible reintroduction sites. The department shall support research investigating the specific habitat requirements, population dynamics, mortality factors, ecology, and behavior of the Morro Bay kangaroo rat — information required to ensure proper management of this subspecies and its habitat.*

• **California Least Tern**

Listed as an endangered bird by both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game, the California least tern (*Sterna albifrons brownii*) is a rare and special bird in the Morro Bay area. Once populating breeding grounds on beach sites from Monterey Bay south to Baja California, the California least tern now nests at only 25 sites between San Francisco Bay and the Mexican border, most of these threatened by building developments and human activities. The California least tern is facing extinction due to the continuing destruction of feeding and nesting habitats, and human disturbance.

These graceful little birds nest from late May through August in loose colonies that cannot withstand much disturbance. Nesting habitat requirements include relatively flat areas of sand or dried mud with little or no vegetation for nest sites, and a body of shallow water with a good supply of small fish nearby. A nest has been

observed on the northern end of the Morro Bay sandspit, and Morro Bay is a possible feeding area for breeding and nonbreeding adult birds.

Policy: *The department shall survey appropriate areas for California least tern nest sites. If nests are found, information on the least tern and cautions against disturbing the nesting birds shall be posted. If deemed warranted and necessary, vehicle and horse traffic shall be restricted to the beach below the high tide line, leaving the sensitive areas of soft sand undisturbed. Dog leash laws shall be strictly enforced. The department shall cooperate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game in their efforts to restore and enhance degraded California least tern habitat and to induce colonization of new areas.*

• **Morro Shoulderband Snail**

The Morro shoulderband snail, *Helminthoglypta walkeriana*, is a land mollusk that occurs only in the sand dunes in the immediate vicinity of the southern tip of Morro Bay. Restricted to the stabilized, vegetated, Flandrian-age dunes, the Morro shoulderband snail is found in close association with the distinct vegetation found growing in these sandy soils. Mock heather is a preferred plant species. The snails take shelter around the roots and the moist duff that accumulates beneath the plants.

The Morro shoulderband snail is threatened with extinction because of habitat destruction due to urban development throughout its very restricted range, and vehicle traffic within its relatively protected habitat in Montana de Oro State Park. Where the snail survives, its numbers may be limited because the mature dune scrub vegetation provides inferior food and cover.

The range of the Morro shoulderband snail coincides with Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat. Although both species would benefit from brush renewal, prescribed burning destroys the snails that may be in the burn area. To limit the impact of brush-clearing activities on the snail population, burns should be of limited size, the burn pattern should create the maximum amount of edge, and the burns should be infrequent enough to allow the burned-over area to revegetate and to give the snails a chance to migrate to the new area before the adjacent vegetation is burned.

Policy: *Management of lands constituting the habitat of the Morro shoulderband snail shall provide for the protection of the species and the enhancement of its habitat. All actions shall be coordinated with the management of the Morro Bay kangaroo rat. The department shall maintain cooperation and coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to promote the perpetuation of the Morro shoulderband snail at Montana de Oro State Park.*

• **Monarch Butterfly**

Well known for its attractive coloration and migratory habits, the monarch butterfly is of great scientific and interpretive interest. One of the two populations of monarchs in North America migrates annually south through the Pacific states to a limited number of overwintering sites along the California coast. Monarch butterflies are attracted to groves of eucalyptus trees in Montana de Oro State Park where they can find roost sites protected from the elements, and a source of water and a ready supply of nectar. The monarch butterflies, however, evolved with native vegetation and existed in California before the introduction of eucalyptus.

With a nearly worldwide distribution, the monarch butterfly is not in danger of extinction as a species, but the North American populations are very vulnerable due to their overwintering strategy of congregating in large flocks in small areas. Because the phenomenon of the North



Roosting sites of the monarch butterflies in the park will be protected.

American migration could be lost in the near future, the conservation of monarch butterfly overwintering sites has been designated as a top priority of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and the monarch butterfly is listed on the international treaty known as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

The nonnative eucalyptus groves in the unit are proposed for removal. Temporary protection of groups of trees heavily used by monarch butterflies, gradual removal of eucalyptus, and revegetation with native trees may allow these unique creatures to gradually relocate to the native trees or to establish new overwintering roost sites.

Policy: *The eucalyptus groves shall be surveyed during the winter roosting season of the monarch butterfly. Heavily used groves shall be identified and temporarily protected until the butterflies have relocated to established native vegetation. The department shall support research into the ecology of the monarch butterfly. A resource management plan shall be developed and implemented to promote the perpetuation of the monarch butterfly resource at Montana de Oro State Park and to effectively interpret the unique behavior of this interesting insect.*

• **Feral Animal Control**

To achieve a natural wildlife population in the park, adverse influences by feral animals or uncontrolled domestic animals (cats, dogs, and pigs in particular) must be controlled or eradicated. Cats and dogs can seriously threaten wildlife, a visitor's experience can be disturbed by the sight or intimidating action of a stray dog, and wild pigs can cause considerable environmental damage with their rooting activities in moist areas. Feral cats released into Montana de Oro State Park or escaped from nearby urban development are a particular problem. Evidence of wild pig activities has been found in the more remote, eastern portions of the unit.

Policy: *It shall be the policy of the department to strictly enforce department rules and regulations regarding feral animals or uncontrolled domestic animals in Montana de Oro State Park. Feral cats shall be removed as humanely as possible, and a continuing program of population management shall be designed and implemented. An interpretive/educational program shall be developed focusing on the domestic cat as an unnatural part of the ecosystem and as a danger to native wildlife due to predation and competition for resources. To restore native ecosystems and prevent widespread damage, a feral pig management program shall be developed and implemented. Monitoring, control, or eradication of feral pigs shall be important elements of this plan.*

• **Vector Control**

Rodents, as well as other animals, can transmit diseases or support parasites capable of transmitting certain diseases to humans. The probability of most diseases reaching epizootic levels (disease levels in animals that resemble epidemic levels in humans), and becoming a possible health hazard to humans is in many cases related directly to overpopulation of the animal host. As animal populations become crowded, the possibility of diseases increases. Population increases in ground squirrels have been noted in this area, and raccoons foraging in the campgrounds can come in contact with visitors. A species of tick, *Ixodes pacificus*, identified on the Coon Creek Trail in Montana de Oro State Park, has been implicated in the transmission of Lyme disease, a potentially fatal human disease.

Policy: *The populations of animals that are important vectors of disease, such as ground squirrels and raccoons, shall be visually monitored by field personnel while pursuing their regular duties. If significant increases in animal observations are reported in any particular area, a public health officer shall be consulted. Should epizootic levels of disease, including the presence of Lyme disease, be found in areas frequented by the public, population control and public information measures shall be carried out as necessary for public safety.*

• **Archeological Resources**

Many archeological resources are known to exist at Montana de Oro State Park. There may be other such resources concealed by vegetation or located in unsurveyed areas. It is possible that future disturbances, natural or cultural, will uncover such resources.

Policy: *In the event that a new archeological discovery is made at Montana de Oro State Park, the incident shall immediately be reported to the appropriate department staff person who will determine the validity and significance of the discovery and will recommend appropriate protective or stabilization action. Specific management programs shall be developed when significant cultural resources are threatened, endangered, or of special concern.*



The midden on top of Little Morro Rock in Spooner Cove is rapidly eroding due to frequent visitor access.

• **Little Morro Rock Archeological Site**

There is a 15 by 20 meter midden on top of "Little Morro Rock" in Spooner Cove that is rapidly eroding due to frequent visitor access. Trampling and loss of vegetation have resulted in site deflation, perimeter erosion, and major blowouts. This site, SLO-497, appears to be exceptionally rich in fish bone, shell fragments, and lithic material.

Policy: *Site SLO-497 on top of "Little Morro Rock" in Spooner Cove shall be stabilized and protected from further human-caused erosion. A test excavation shall be conducted to determine the antiquity, significance, and integrity of the site. Full-scale excavation of the site may be conducted if it is determined that excavation is the only means to protect the artifacts and the site information.*

• **Artifact Curation**

The prehistoric archeological sites around Spooner Cove are among the richest and potentially most significant sites along the central California coast. Site SLO-1 on the terrace north of Spooner Cove is certainly the largest and most significant Northern Chumash village site in the park and may be the best preserved village site on the entire Pecho coast. The terraces are often crossed by day-use visitors and by visitors from the nearby campground. Artifacts are regularly exposed on the surface due to rodent activity and rain. There are collections from these sites located in the Spooner ranch house in the park.

Policy: *A plan for the curation and management of artifacts from the archeological sites near Spooner Cove shall be developed and implemented. Trails and parking areas located on archeological site SLO-1 shall be closed and relocated, or a plan for mitigating the negative impacts resulting from continued facility use shall be developed and implemented.*

• **Sand Dunes Archeological Sites**

There are 30 prehistoric archeological sites in the sand dunes between Islay Creek and Morro Rock. Almost all of these sites are in Montana de Oro State Park. Some of these sites are large enough, with dense shell concentrations, to be seen in aerial photographs. Many of these sites need to be better mapped, photographed, and recorded.

Policy: *A resource management project shall be undertaken to monitor, evaluate, and update records for the archeological sites on the Morro Bay sandspit. These sites and others in the dune system south to Islay Creek shall be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an archeological district.*

• **Campfire Center**

The Montana de Oro campfire center is built on archeological site SLO-496. No testing of the site or mitigation of impacts to the site were conducted in association with the campfire center construction.

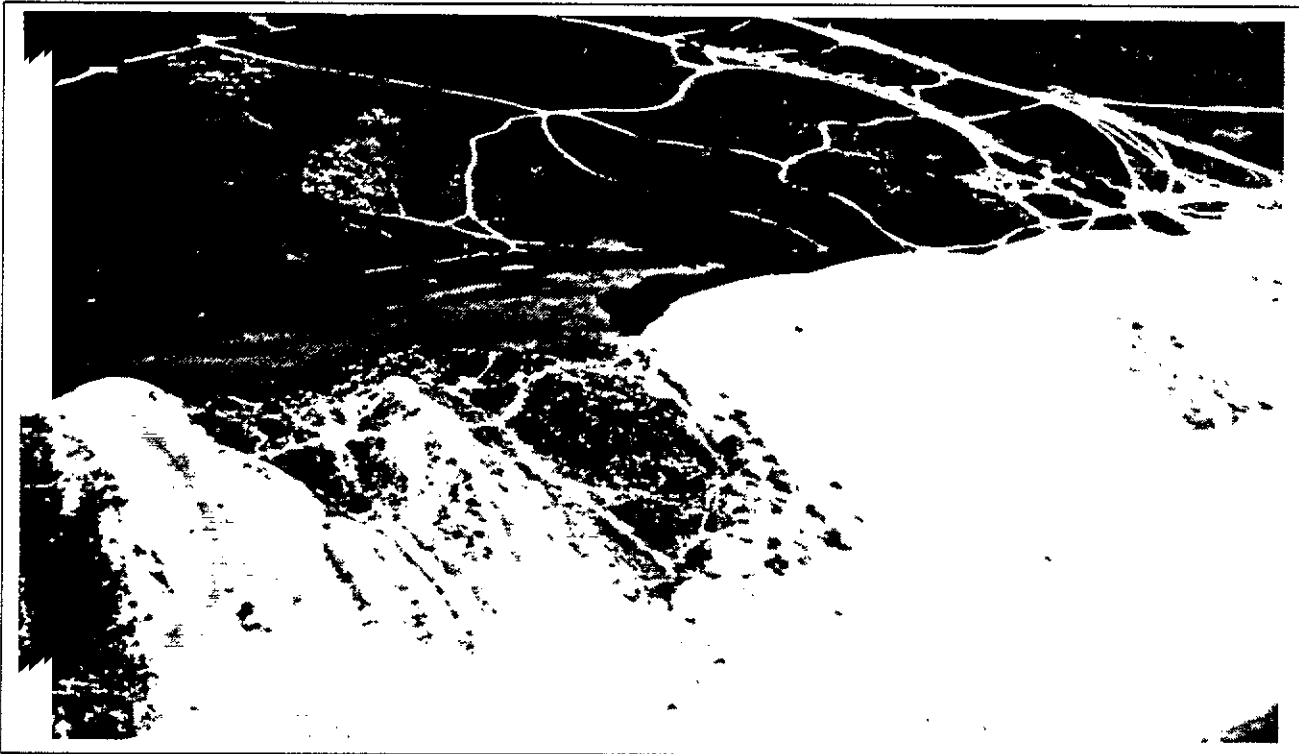
Policy: *The Islay Creek campfire center may remain in its present location. However, any expansion or removal of facilities or maintenance work involving disturbance of soil below the surface must be preceded by testing of archeological site SLO-496. Testing shall be sufficient to determine mitigation measures to protect the site. The mitigation design shall be implemented concurrently with work on the campfire center.*

• Archeological Investigations

Like archeological resources in general, those found in Montana de Oro State Park are nonrenewable resources relating to California's past. They contain information necessary to reconstruct the complex mosaic of past cultures in our state covering many millennia. It is department policy to preserve such resources in place whenever possible. It is also important for the department to have as much data as possible on record about the resources it is charged to protect and to present this information to the public as accurately as possible.

Policy: *When land uses, facility development, or natural causes, such as erosion, create ongoing or unavoidable impacts to archeological sites, and where it is necessary to know more about the nature of the archeological deposits, the department shall study these sites in an effort to preserve their heritage values. Such studies shall assess age, cultural affiliation, artifact content, and significant attributes of these sites. This information shall be used to guide preservation, management, and interpretive actions. The department shall take appropriate stabilization or protective measures to ensure against the inadvertent loss of heritage values at threatened sites.*

The 30 prehistoric archeological sites in the sand dunes between Islay Creek and Morro Rock have recently been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an archeological district.



• **Spooner Ranch House**

The Spooner ranch house is a good example of adaptive rural vernacular architecture characteristic of turn of the century farm life. The structure is now used as a visitor center.

Policy: *The exterior of the Spooner ranch house shall be maintained as it appeared during the early 1900s. The interior of the house may be adapted for State Park System use. The original sense of space and usage of the main room of the house shall not be compromised.*



• **Historic Features**

There are many historic features associated with the Spooner occupation. Some of these features do not appear to have interpretive or historic value beyond the information that can be preserved by detailed recording. Other features, such as the warehouse-tunnel-wharf complex on the south side of Spooner Cove, appear to have some historic significance and interpretive potential.

Policy: *The warehouse-tunnel-wharf remains on the south side of Spooner Cove shall not be removed.*

The exterior of the Spooner ranch house is to be maintained as it appeared during the early 1900s; the interior will be adapted for use as a visitor center.

• **Islay Creek Barn**

The wood-frame barn on Islay Creek at the eastern end of the park has some historical and esthetic values that may remind visitors of the rural, rustic, independent pastoral history of this former ranch.

Policy: *The department shall maintain and repair as necessary the wood-frame barn associated with the ranching period before public ownership. The barn may be adapted for recreational use. If the barn becomes structurally unsafe, it shall be removed.*



- **Natural Landscape**

Scenic quality in Montana de Oro State Park is derived from its rugged topography, diverse vegetation, and abundant wildlife. Human-made structures and facilities encroach on the natural landscape and detract from the scenic features in the unit. Overhead power lines along the coastal terraces, park residence trailers, and maintenance facilities in Islay Creek Campground exemplify negative esthetic features.

Policy: *Management of Montana de Oro State Park shall be directed toward the maintenance of the natural landscape and a reduction or elimination of human-made intrusions. Residence structures and maintenance facilities shall be located in areas of low visibility. The department shall work to reroute or underground utility lines that currently traverse Montana de Oro State Park.*

Views of the open coastal terraces in the park will be maintained.

- **Wilderness**

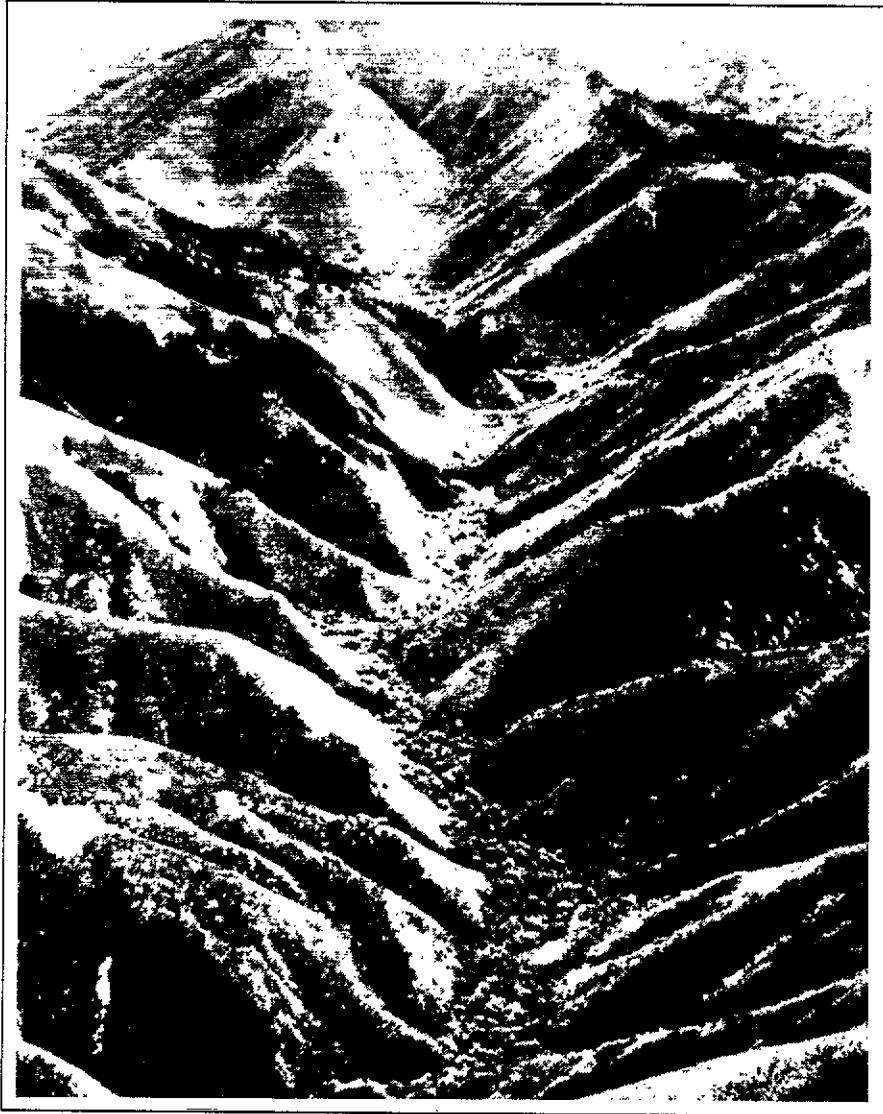
In a 1978 report to the governor and Legislature, the Resources Agency identified the Coon Creek/Islay Creek Roadless Area in Montana de Oro State Park as a potential wilderness area under the provisions of the California Wilderness Act. According to the act, "A wilderness area, in contrast to those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain." The Coon Creek watershed and portions of the Islay Creek watershed in the park meet this definition of wilderness. The roadless area totals 4,677 acres.

The Coon Creek watershed is very rugged. Views from the trail, which parallels the creek, reveal a pristine landscape. The steep north-facing slopes are densely vegetated with an impenetrable shrub layer. Bishop pines are common on these slopes; the trees are surrounded by the dense shrubs. The canyon bottom is densely vegetated with willows, which form a complete canopy over

the stream in many areas. The perennial stream supports an annual run of steelhead. The north-facing slopes support coastal sage scrub vegetation. There is virtually no sign of the works of humans in this area; it has retained its primeval character.

The upper Islay Creek watershed in the park is similar to Coon Creek except that Bishop pines are absent from the north-facing slopes and a road traverses the canyon bottom, providing access for department vehicles and for private landowners with property in the upper watershed outside the park.

Although the Coon Creek/Islay Creek roadless area is not officially designated as a wilderness, it is being managed in a manner consistent with the perpetuation of its wilderness character. The area is a significant recreation resource, providing the public with opportunities for solitude, backcountry camping, and long-distance hikes over nearly pristine terrain.



The Coon Creek watershed: wild and untrammeled.

Policy: *The department shall continue to manage the Coon Creek/Islay Creek roadless area in a manner consistent with long-term perpetuation of its wilderness character, while providing the public with opportunities for wilderness-like experiences.*

Allowable Use Intensity

The California Public Resources Code, Section 5019.5, requires that a land carrying capacity survey be made before the preparation of any development plan for any state park or state recreation area. Section 5001.96 further requires that attendance be held within limits so established. Allowable use intensity is a refinement of the land carrying capacity concept and is prepared as part of the Resource Element of the general plan in partial fulfillment of the above code sections.

Allowable use intensity is just one of several factors considered in developing the Land Use Element of the general plan. Other factors that may also be considered in determining land use for any unit of the State Park System are classification and purpose, recreation needs, design considerations, and social carrying capacity, or the desired quality of the recreation experience.

Allowable use intensity determinations establish the limits of development and use an area can sustain without an unacceptable degree of deterioration in the character and value of the scenic, natural, and cultural resources. Determinations are based on analysis and integration of resource management and protection objectives, resource constraints, and resource sensitivities information.

Resource management objectives are defined by the Public Resources Code and other law, unit classifications, and declarations of purpose, and by specific declarations of resource management policy presented in this Resource Element.

Resource constraints are factors that would make visitor use or facility development unsafe, economically impractical, or undesirable. They are determined by evaluating such factors as erodibility and compaction potential of soils, geologic hazards, slope stability and relief, hydrologic conditions, potential for pollution of surface waters, and flooding.

Sensitivities are conditions, locations, or values of resources that warrant restricted use or development to protect resources. Sensitivities are evaluated by considering such factors as the ability of the ecosystem to withstand human impact (ecological sensitivity), not only in the short term but also over a more extended time span; the fragility and significance of archeological and historical resources; vegetation characteristics such as durability, fragility, and regeneration rates; and wildlife considerations such as population levels, stability, and tolerance to human activity. Sensitivities may also include scenic resources; rare, threatened, or endangered plants, animals, and habitats; unique or scientifically important botanic features; and other resources of regional or statewide significance.

Based on the preceding factors, allowable use intensities for the lands of Montana de Oro State Park were determined and are shown on the allowable use intensity map. Four use intensity categories have been developed: **very low, low, moderate, and high.**

Allowable Use Intensity Zones

The **very low-intensity use zone** encompasses areas of high resource sensitivity. This zone includes the roadless/primitive area (proposed wilderness area), the Morro Bay sandspit, and Morro Bay kangaroo habitat. Appropriate facilities include trail camps in the roadless/primitive area and hiking and equestrian trails.

The **low-intensity use zone** is quite extensive. Constraints in the low-intensity use zone include slopes over 25% and unstable to marginally stable dunes; sensitivities include habitat for the endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat (in part), geographic landmarks (including peaks and ridgelines), and rare or endangered plant habitat. Appropriate facilities in this zone are limited to existing roads, and trails, trail camps, and new roads placed to avoid the most sensitive resources.

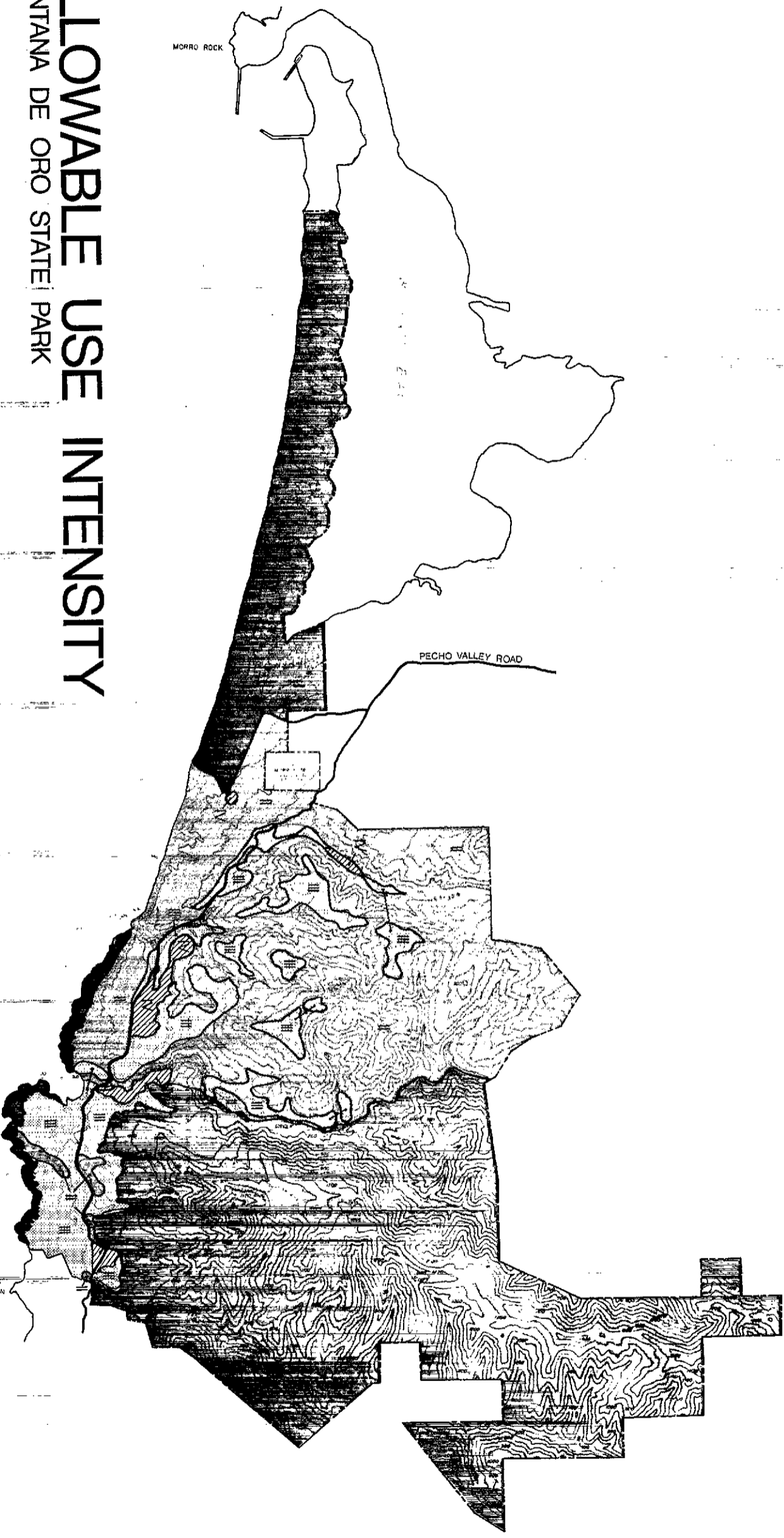
The **moderate-intensity use zone** includes slopes of 16 to 25%, coastal terrace grasslands, ridgetops, and coastal beaches. Appropriate facilities in this zone include trails, roads, and primitive picnic and camp sites.

The **high-intensity use zone** includes sites of existing facilities and other gently sloping to flat areas without important constraints or sensitivities. Appropriate facilities in this zone include campgrounds and picnic and parking areas.

ALLOWABLE USE INTENSITY

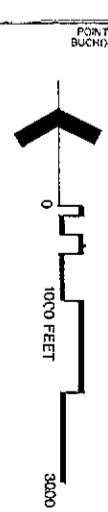
MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION



USE INTENSITY CATEGORY	SITE CHARACTERISTICS	REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITY/FACILITY
I - LOW USE INTENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATURAL PRESERVE CALIFORNIA LESTER TERN HABITAT MORRO BAY KANGAROO RAT HABITAT MORRO POINT PRIMITIVE AREA PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA COASTAL BLUFFS, COASTAL ROCKY POINTS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATURE OBSERVATION HIKING, EQUESTRIAN USE ON DESIGNATED TRAILS MECHANIZED ACCESS RESTRICTED TO EMERGENCIES TRAIL CAMPS IN ROADSIDE PRIMITIVE AREA
II - MODERATE USE INTENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MORRO BAY KANGAROO RAT HABITAT (IN PART) MORRO SHOULDER AND SMALL HABITAT (IN PART) DUNE ECOSYSTEMS PARE PLANT HABITAT RIPARIAN CORRIDORS CULTURAL FEATURES GEOGRAPHIC LANDMARKS (PEAKS, RIDGELINES) SLOPES GREATER THAN 25% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ROADS RESTRICTED TO EXISTING ALIGNMENTS OR PLACED TO AVOID IMPACTS TO RESOURCES BIOCYCLE USE ON SERVICE ROADS
III - HIGH USE INTENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COASTAL TERRACE GRASSLANDS SLOPES 16-25% RELATIVELY STABLE SOILS SOME SENSITIVE RESOURCE AREAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INFORMAL PICNIC AREAS VISTA POINTS
IV - VERY HIGH USE INTENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SITES OF EXISTING FACILITIES GENTLY SLOPING TO FLAT SITES WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTS OR SENSITIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FORMAL CAMPGROUNDS PICNIC AREAS VISITOR CENTER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FACILITY OPERATIONS, SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES EMPLOYEE HOUSING MAJOR PAVED ROADS

ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES PERMITTED IN LOWER NUMERICAL CATEGORIES ARE ALSO APPROPRIATE.



<h1>4</h1>	MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK ALLOWABLE USE INTENSITY MAP GENERAL PLAN - RESOURCE ELEMENT	RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION APPROVED _____ DATE _____	REVISIONS Use intensity category boundaries changed. Addition of very low use intensity category. Sheet layout changed from vertical to horizontal format.	DATE 12-30-87 3-17-88	DESIGNED KEN GRAY DRAWN W. Yee 12/87 CHECKED DON HOOK
	DRAWING NO. 21604 MAP				

Land Use Element

This element of the general plan addresses current and proposed land use at Montana de Oro State Park. Reflecting the department's dual mission, the land use goal is to protect important park resources, while providing for recreational use and development.

A land use plan defines the pattern for the fabric of human activity in a given area. It establishes the character of a place by determining what happens, where it happens, and to what degree it happens. It defines routes of travel and use areas, as well as nonuse areas free from human change. It controls use and development and arranges park activities and elements so visitors may have the opportunity to enjoy the recreational, educational, and spiritual experiences the park has to offer.

Montana de Oro is capable of providing diverse and quality recreational and educational opportunities. The Land Use Element determines appropriate means of providing these opportunities. It analyzes existing land use, conditions, and the opportunities and constraints of the park's resources, classifies lands for protection or development, and identifies areas of potential acquisition. The land use proposals take into consideration regional recreational needs based on the department's projections (see Introduction - Regional Recreation Needs and Deficiencies) and the expressed interests and concerns of the public and other agencies. The suitability of the resources for accommodating recreational uses and development is reflected in the Allowable Use Intensity Map of the Resource Element as well as in the resource management policies.

Land Use Goals

The following two general goals are intended to maximize visitor enjoyment of the park's resources. Detailed concepts will be discussed further on.

Quality park experiences is the first general goal. Within the objectives of the plan, "quality of park experience" is the most important consideration for park visitors. For individual visitors, enjoyment of their own chosen interests will determine their satisfaction with the unit as a whole. For this reason, selection, location, density, and intensity of recreation activities are critical.

Opportunities should be made available for people to enjoy individual outdoor experiences in the types of environment best suited to individual needs and values, or "the right thing in the right place," without the negative influences of undesirable activities.

Land use concepts directed toward attainment of quality experiences and protection of individual values include:

1. Separation of incompatible uses.
2. Enforcement of rules and regulations designed to maintain a high-quality experience for visitors.
3. Constant monitoring of activities and uses and adjustments to land use patterns as may be necessary to gain maximum enjoyment of the resources for the greatest number of people, within the stated resource preservation objectives and policies.

Diversified park experiences is the second general goal. Opportunities for recreation need to be diverse because people's values and needs vary greatly. A pleasant outdoor experience for one person may be something entirely different for another. The park cannot be all things to all people. However, Montana de Oro State Park can provide for differing needs and interests and can allow people to act freely within it, as long as land uses remain compatible with each other, the resources, environment, and the purposes of the park and the State Park System.

Existing Land Use Conditions and Assumptions

The land use considerations discussed in the following sections outline the process by which land use decisions were made. The logic of planning decisions can be traced from initial assumptions, existing physical conditions, and planning issues through the alternative land use and facility plans to the chosen objectives and proposed concepts for actual land use and development.

Recreation Values

- Montana de Oro, its shoreline, coastal terraces, and high peaks and ridges are highly scenic.
- Because of their rugged character, dense vegetation, and/or steep slopes and limited roads, the upper Coon and Islay canyons are largely wild and untrammelled.
- The open, undeveloped character of the coastal terraces is a significant value, particularly when found next to rapidly growing coastal residential communities.
- The quiet beauty and natural character of the park are primary values.
- The six miles of coastline provide numerous opportunities for beach and water-related recreation activities.
- Hazard Reef extends from Montana de Oro southward to Point Buchon and is noted as one of California's most significant underwater resource areas.
- Montana de Oro is the southernmost part of Morro Bay, one of California's major recreation destination areas providing a diversity of recreation opportunities of state, regional, and local interest.
- Montana de Oro lies north of extensive undeveloped federal and private lands, which may offer additional recreational opportunities for beach access, back-country camping, and long-distance hiking.
- The California Coastal Trail may one day link up through Montana de Oro State Park.

Recreation Use

- Other than the primitive campground at Islay Creek, no formal public recreational facilities have been constructed at the park.
- Popular recreation activities at the unit include camping, hiking/walking, horseback riding, fishing, surfing, skin/ scuba diving, mountain biking, swimming, nature observation, sunning, and picnicking. Hang-gliding and educational study (Camp KEEP) are allowed by special event permit.
- Most recreation activity is beach or water-oriented. Use is heaviest where the beach is most accessible from the road or parking area.
- At peak use periods, the campground is full and turns away visitors.
- Numerous undesignated areas along Pecho Valley Road are used for parking. In some cases, the extent of parking creates hazardous conditions on the road for both drivers and pedestrians.
- Many use areas at the park are substandard; some have been damaged by unplanned and uncontrolled use.
- Use of the trails by different user groups (hikers, horse riders, and mountain bikers) has led to trail erosion and conflicts between users.
- The current low level of recreational development is not adequate to meet existing recreation use.
- The environmental education camp (Camp KEEP) is a popular and well utilized program operated by Kern County primarily for Kern County school children who, for safety and security reasons, require an area relatively isolated or physically separated from other park visitors.

Physical Factors

- The park staff has little control over public access into the park. Pecho Valley Road, the only park access, is a county-owned road for three of its five miles within the park. Present ownership of the Field Ranch includes an access easement over the park-owned portion of Pecho Valley Road. Army Road, which provides the only vehicular access to the Morro Bay sandspit from Pecho Valley Road, is not entirely within the park's boundaries or the department's control.
- The primary use season (April through October) coincides with the year's warmer months, when people are drawn to beach and water-oriented recreation.
- The primary beach resource of Montana de Oro is located north of the mouth of Hazard Canyon.
- Spooner Cove, at the mouth of Islay Canyon, is the only location in the park where beach level vehicular access to the water is possible, owing to topography, steep bluffs, or high sand dunes.
- Development opportunities near the water are limited due to physical constraints, lack of flat land, and sensitive resources.
- With the exception of the Hazard Canyon horse area and the South Hazard Canyon area, there is virtually no flat land in the park's narrow canyons suitable for new development due to the steep slopes and poor accessibility.
- In general, new vehicular access or recreation development near the beach or in the canyons will be extremely difficult, expensive, and environmentally damaging.

- Due to physical limitations, resource sensitivities, and lack of developable flat land, only two areas in addition to existing use areas are suitable for intensive recreation development. One of these areas, near Coon Creek, has no accessible beach resource; the other is accessible to the beach near the mouth of Hazard Canyon.
- For these reasons, certain recreation development will not generally be feasible (for example, large-scale campgrounds, boat-launch areas, and beachfront camping).
- Most existing use areas of the park have no developed water supply; fresh water sources are scarce along the coast.
- Trail erosion, due to steep slopes and highly erodible soils, is exacerbated by mountain bike and equestrian use.
- Considering the physical limitations and sensitivity of the resources at Montana de Oro, the capacity of the land for human recreation use is relatively low.
- Considering the park's proximity to the diverse recreation facilities and opportunities available elsewhere in the Morro Bay-Baywood Park-Los Osos area, some recreation activities do not need to be provided within the park.
- Residential development is encroaching on the unit from the north; homes are located within 500 feet of the park's boundary.

Transportation and Circulation

- Origin of Montana de Oro Visitors
 - About one-third of the park's day-use visitors are local (San Luis Obispo County) residents or come from the Central Valley.
 - For camping, about one-third of the visitors come from the Central Valley, one-third from southern California, and another third from other areas.
 - Montana de Oro is within a two to three-hour travel zone of the Los Angeles-Santa Barbara area and three to four hours from the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Means of travel to Montana de Oro
 - Nearly all visitors (98%) arrive by auto or recreation vehicle. Less than 2% of visitors come by foot, bicycle, bus, or horse.
 - Public transportation is limited in the Baywood/Los Osos area. San Luis Obispo is the nearest commercial bus line stop. The local public transit system's nearest stop, on Los Osos Valley Road, is two miles from the park entrance.
 - Currently there are no regional or local trails to the park, although San Luis Obispo County's new recreation plan designates proposed trail corridor connections to the park.
- Routes of vehicle access to Montana de Oro
 - Pecho Valley Road (connecting with Los Osos Valley Road one-half mile north) is the only vehicular access route into the park.
 - Major vehicle access to Pecho Valley Road is via South Bay Boulevard to Los Osos Valley Road from Highway 1 at Morro Bay, five miles from the park, or via Los Osos Valley Road from San Luis Obispo and Highway 101, 12 miles east.
 - New development at the park may generate increased traffic on access roads.

- Means of travel at Montana de Oro
 - One two-lane county road, Pecho Valley Road, traverses the length of the park. Access to all use areas is via this road. Beyond Spooner ranch house, the road is park-owned to the south park boundary where it becomes a private access road through the Field Ranch.
 - Access to the Hazard Canyon Horse Camp from Pecho Valley Road is via a steep, narrow, one-lane dirt road.
 - For some visitors, traveling within the unit is the most valued part of their recreation experience; these visitors may hike or ride bicycles or horses.
 - Owing to resource and physical constraints, many areas of the park are inaccessible except by foot or horse.
 - There are about 26 miles of riding and/or hiking trails within the park.
 - Horses and mountain bikes are not permitted off designated trails.
 - Off-highway vehicle use is not permitted at the park.
 - There are no state-provided transportation services such as trams or ferries.

Planning Issues and Alternatives

An analysis of existing conditions and park resources along with results of a user survey distributed at the park allowed the planning team to identify many problems and planning issues at Montana de Oro State Park. The diverse concerns expressed in letters, interviews, user surveys, and the first public workshop resulted in the development of two alternative plans for recreation use at the park.

Alternative A called for minimal development, enhancement of some existing facilities, and maintenance of the park's undeveloped character. Alternative B called for a higher level of recreation development. (Plans A and B are shown in Appendix A.)

The two alternative plans were presented at the second public workshop where the plans were discussed and commented on. Participants were divided into small groups and were instructed to evaluate the plans and prepare their own single plan (on which the group could agree) that resolved the issues concerning the group. The plans developed by the workgroups served as important tools in helping the planning team assess the major issues, the areas of consensus, and the various trade-offs that would have to be reconciled in the development of a final plan.

Public evaluation of the alternatives identified the following significant issues and areas of general agreement:

Areas of General Agreement

- Montana de Oro is environmentally sensitive and should not be damaged by overdevelopment.
- The natural and quiet character of the landscape is an important recreation value.
- Recreation uses and facilities that are not damaging to existing environmental values are appropriate, such as riding and hiking trails, beach use, interpretive facilities, scenic overlooks, and picnicking.
- Eliminating park access from Army Road is a high priority to control off-highway vehicle activity in the area and restore Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat.
- Enhancement of the existing campground is preferred to expansion in order to improve its appearance as well as bring it up to standards justified by its use.
- The State Coastal Trail should be extended through the park and south through private property.
- Existing informal day-use areas should be improved to make them safe and bring them up to standards justified by their use, but they should not be "overimproved."
- The existing trail system needs better maintenance.
- The Islay Creek barn should remain, if feasible, for use as a trail rest area.

- Acquisition of the Field Ranch as an addition to Montana de Oro State Park would preserve significant landscape and resource values as well as provide additional recreation opportunities.
- Camp KEEP is a worthwhile program that should become a permanent facility in the park with more opportunities for use by the public.
- Certain uses and activities (picnicking, hang-gliding) can be appropriate with adequate location, design, and control.
- The existing ranger residences are unsightly and should be screened or relocated.
- Obtaining ownership of Pecho Valley Road from the county would be an important first step in controlling park use and traffic, making safety improvements, and providing bicycle access through the park.

Significant Land Use and Facilities Issues

- Location and intensity of camping.
- Impact on the resources of a new road and parking area for the sandspit.
- Impact of mountain biking on trails, and conflicts with other users.

Land Use Objectives

In response to the recreation needs, problems, and issues identified at Montana de Oro, a set of objectives was formulated to guide future land use and development to reach the land use goals previously identified — quality and diverse park experiences.

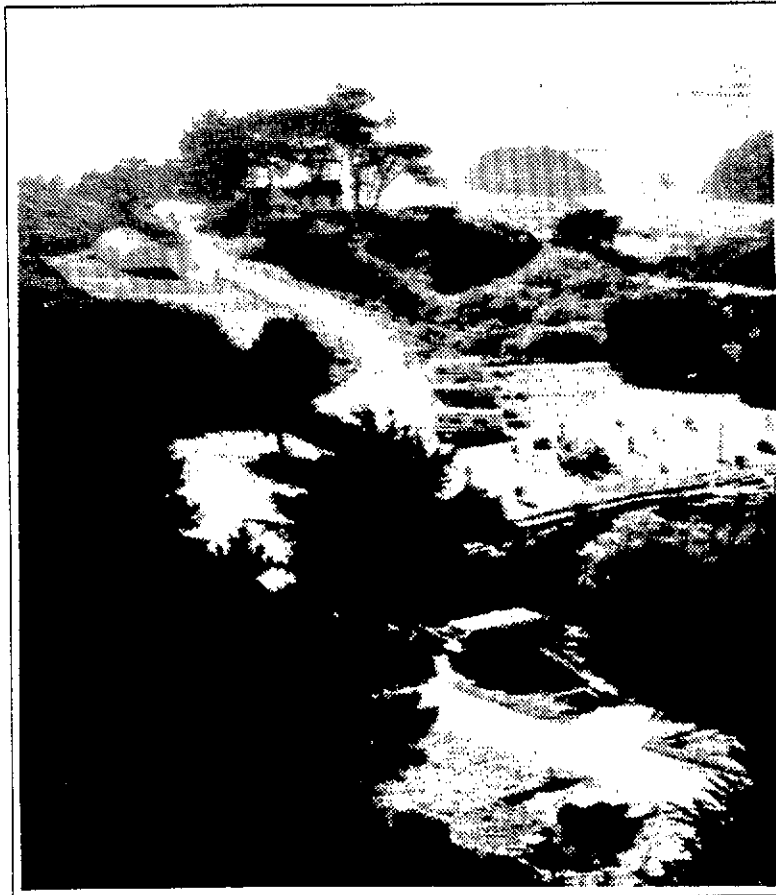
1. Preserve the integrity and natural beauty of the park's landscape.
2. Continue to provide opportunities for diverse recreational uses of low to moderate intensity.
3. Minimize environmental damage caused by recreation use and development.
4. Solve operational problems and resource damage related to uncontrolled vehicle access to the park and illegal off-highway vehicle use.
5. Upgrade the quality of existing recreation use areas and solve physical problems in these areas.
6. Increase overnight camping and day-use picnicking to accommodate increasing demand.
7. Link Montana de Oro with the State Coastal Trail.
8. Interpret the site's significant cultural and natural resources.
9. Monitor recreation use and periodically reassess the ability of the resources to absorb the use they are receiving, and adjust use as necessary to adequately protect resource values.



*Preservation of the integrity
and natural beauty of the
park's landscape is a major
land use objective.*

Land Use Recommendations

The general plan calls for upgrading the quality of existing recreation areas as well as adding new camping and picnicking areas to satisfy increasing demand.



General Land Use

To preserve the integrity and beauty of the landscape and the park's quiet primitive character:

- Maximize open space.
 - Allow no new development on the coastal terraces.
 - Leave existing primitive roadless area, upper canyons, peaks, and ridges undisturbed.
 - Whenever possible, locate new development adjacent to existing development or along margins of scenic or open areas where existing vegetation, landforms, or screening will minimize visual impacts.

- Emphasize recreation uses that are compatible with natural values (generally low density, nonintensive, low noise, and low technology) such as horseback riding and hiking, camping, picnicking, natural and cultural interpretation, sunning, surfing, and skin/ scuba diving.
- Protect archeological and historical sites.
- Relocate or screen the existing staff residences.
- Classify the barrier dune complex as a natural preserve.
- Place new and existing utility lines underground.
- Control noise.
 - Isolate or buffer noisy recreation activities from other users.
 - Buffer sensitive resources from noisy recreation activities.

Facility Development

To emphasize low-key recreation use:

- Continue recreation use at low to moderate intensities.
- Upgrade and enhance existing use areas to accommodate existing use.
- Provide low-density camping and picnic facilities to accommodate increased demand.
- Designate the park's offshore lands as an underwater park and provide minimal facilities for scuba divers at Spooner Cove (requires a long-term lease on the lands from the State Lands Commission).

To protect the public and the resources:

- Obtain ownership of Pecho Valley Road through the park and develop a single controlled park access point through which all visitors must pass for access to any use area.
- Eliminate park access from Army Road and fence the park boundary.
- Provide a park office.
- Establish new parking areas. Eliminate the Army Road parking area.
- Bring hazardous or substandard roads, use areas, trails, and facilities up to standards justified by their use.

To interpret the park's natural and cultural resources:

- Adapt the ranch house to serve as a visitor center/park office.
- Provide interpretive panels at various existing and proposed park use areas.
- Encourage development of an environmental education camp/center in a permanent location in the park.

The intent of many of the plan's land use proposals is to minimize environmental damage caused by recreation use and development.



Transportation and Circulation

To encourage alternative modes of circulation to and within the park:

- Encourage local transit systems to provide scheduled service to the park when economically feasible.
- Encourage local government agencies to plan and implement hiking, bicycle, and equestrian trail systems connecting to the park.
- Develop new park trails where necessary to connect park use areas.

- Enhance visitor use of trails by proper trail maintenance, the use of sand ladders or elevated boardwalks in sensitive dune areas, or special construction where appropriate; making trails accessible for the disabled where feasible; and separation of conflicting trail use by designating hiking, riding, and biking trails.

- Provide a connection for the State Coastal Trail through the park.

To maintain recreation densities in balance with the functional capacity of access roads, avoid increasing facilities where access standards are marginal:

- Do not increase recreation use at the Hazard Canyon Horse Camp until access problems are solved.

To minimize road construction:

- Use existing roads and trails where possible.
- Limit vehicular access for beach parking to three strategic locations: Spooner Cove, Hazard Canyon, and near the sandspit.

To emphasize low impact/aesthetic design criteria for roads:

- Design and site new roads for minimum environmental impact and visibility.
- Utilize existing road alignments or trails for new roads when possible.
- Use sensitive road grading with revegetated cut and fill slopes.
- Emphasize views from the road (except where road visibility is undesirable).
- Provide for interpretive or scenic turn-outs.



New trails, including a link in the State Coastal Trail, are proposed by the plan.

Recreation Activities

Under the general plan, opportunities for enjoying recreational and educational experiences will be provided through the following activities:

- Bicycling
- Nature/history study
- Birdwatching
- Photography
- Camping (auto, trail, horse)
- Picnicking
- Fishing
- Skin/scuba diving
- Hang-gliding¹
- Swimming/sunning
- Hiking
- Surfing
- Horseback riding
- Environmental education²
- Jogging

¹ By special-use permit.

² By special-use permit or concession agreement.



The plan will provide continued opportunities for diverse recreational uses of low to moderate intensity.

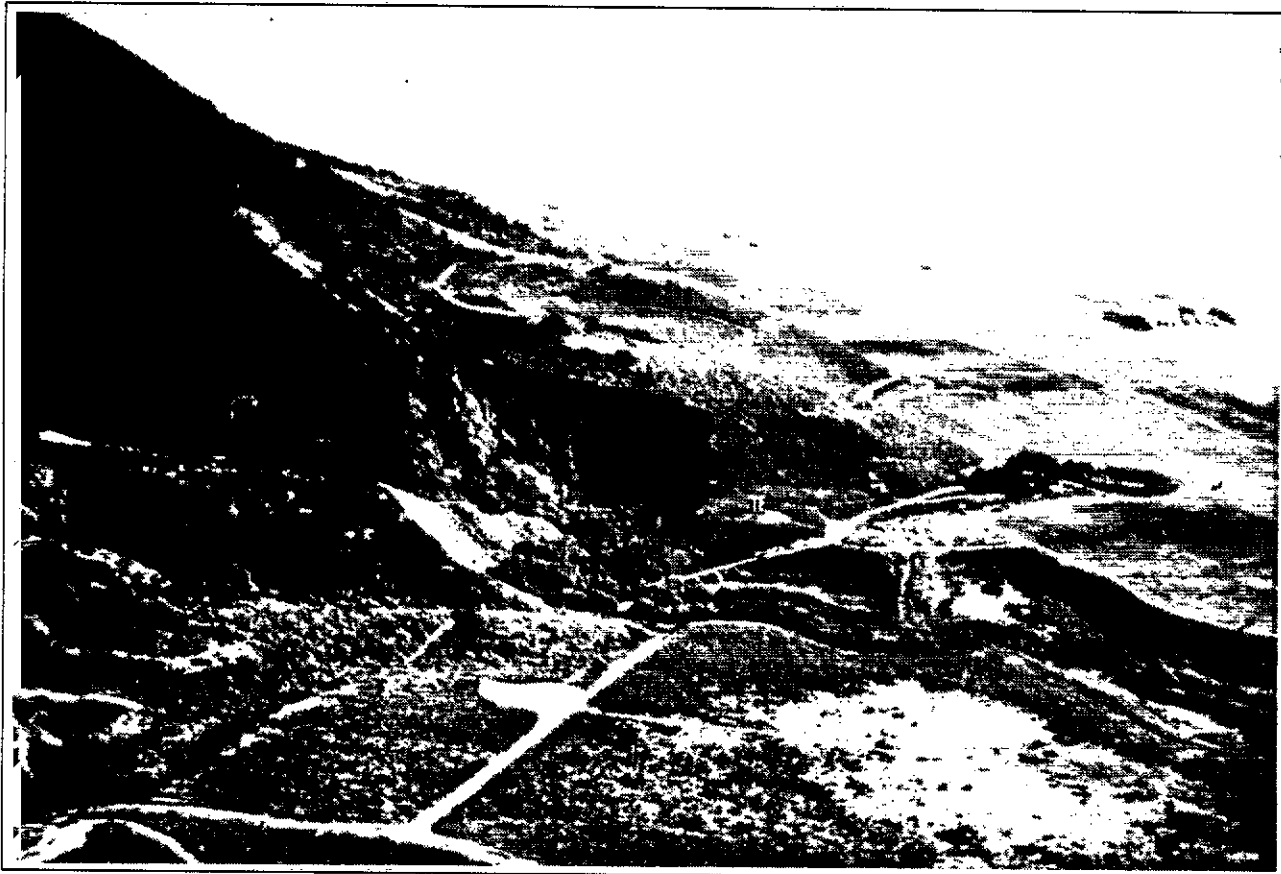
Acquisition

The following discussion and any other comments regarding land acquisition are intended for long-range planning purposes only and are not a commitment to acquire. Although it would be desirable to provide additional public lands around Montana de Oro to solve existing problems, to assure public realization of the park's recreation potentials, and to maintain the integrity of the park's resources, the acquisition of these lands depends on many factors, including the availability of funds and the willingness of the owner to sell.

Direct initial acquisition efforts toward protection of values already in public ownership, the department should:

- Acquire county-owned Army Road right-of-way within the park's boundaries in order to eliminate public vehicular access for preventing additional resource damage and restoring endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat.
- Acquire county-owned Pecho Valley Road within the park's boundaries to solve resource destruction and operational problems related to uncontrolled vehicle access.
- Acquire the entire watershed lands of Coon, Islay, and Hazard canyons for effective resource management and viewshed protection. (Coon Creek lands include those owned by PG&E and BLM.)
- Acquire the Point Buchon marine terrace to protect the park's viewshed and the Hazard Reef offshore formation.

- Acquire undeveloped bayshore lands between Shark Inlet and the adjacent residential area for habitat and viewshed protection and to solve problems of vehicle trespass.
- Acquire undeveloped land in the vicinity of Pecho Valley Road and Army Road that has been identified as critical habitat for the state and federally listed endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat.



The coastal terraces of the Field Ranch south of Montana de Oro (Coon Creek in middleground).

Direct secondary acquisition efforts to expansion for recreation development or other purposes, the department should:

- Obtain a trail right-of-way easement extending from the park to Port San Luis across PG&E lands to complete a necessary link in the proposed California Coastal Trail.
- Obtain loop trail right-of-way/access rights easements across portions of the Field

Ranch from PG&E to extend long-distance and coastal hiking opportunities from the park.

- Acquire any remaining Field Ranch properties (not required for safety/security of the nuclear power plant or for intensive agricultural use) to provide additional nonintensive recreational uses, such as long-distance hiking and back-country camping, and to protect resource values.

- Acquire private and city-owned properties at the tip of the Morro Bay sandspit to round out the park's ownership and provide complete park control of access and management to protect the sandspit's sensitive resource values.

- Obtain a long-term lease on the park's offshore lands from the State Lands Commission in order to establish the area as an underwater park.

Land Use Plan

Following the mapping of the park's important resources and special attractions that need protection, the combined areas of these resources were analyzed in terms of the previously stated land use goals, objectives, and recommendations, and classified into a land use plan as follows:

Land Use Zones

Endangered species protection zone lands are those identified as existing Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat or with the potential for rehabilitation as habitat for this endangered animal. These lands require both protection from human disturbance and use of resource management techniques such as hand-clearing and prescribed burning to maintain suitable habitat.

Natural/cultural preservation zone lands possess outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, and historic resources, which need protection from environmental impact, overuse, and development.

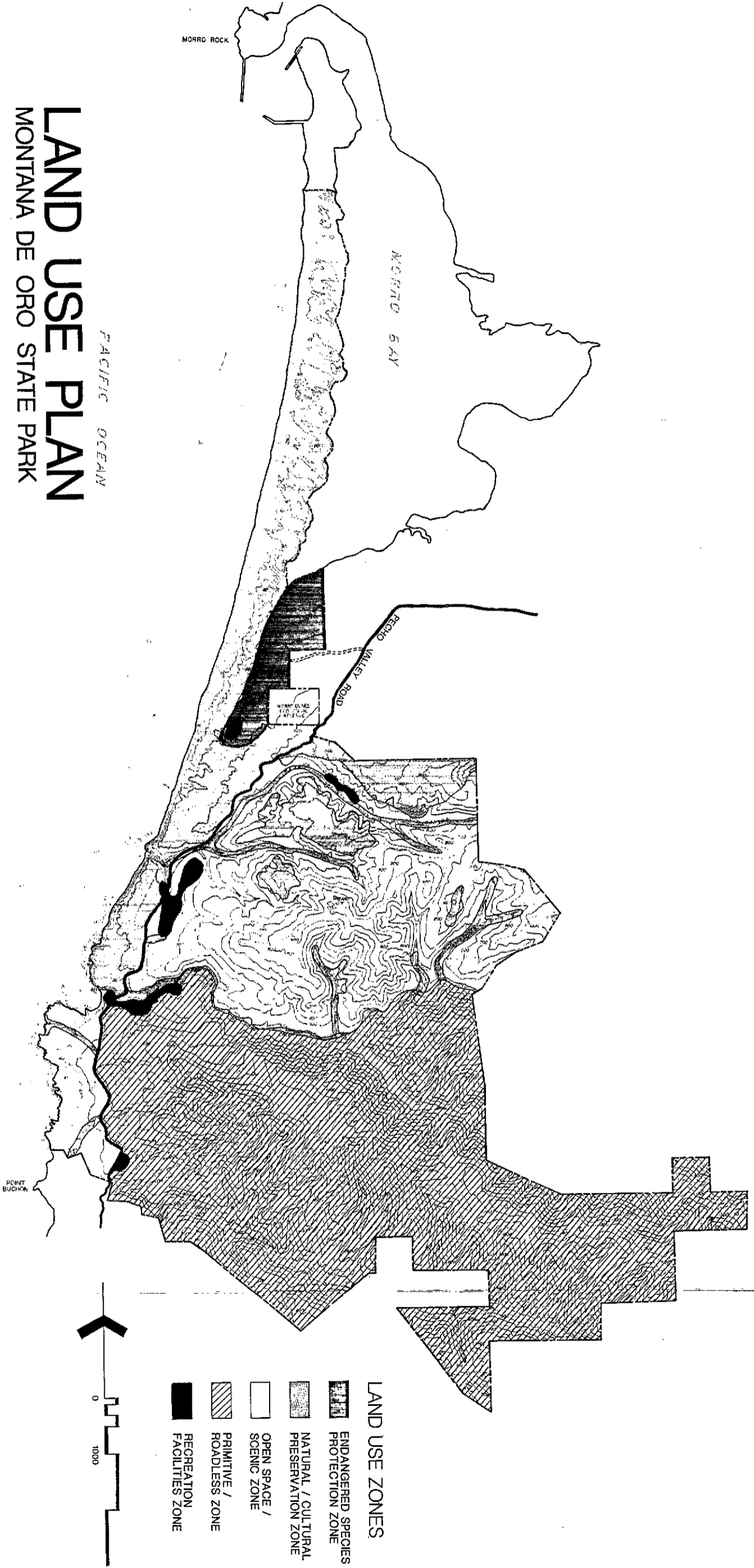
Primitive/roadless zone lands encompass the portions of the Coon Creek and Islay Creek watersheds in the unit that meet the definition of a wilderness area (as defined by the California Wilderness Act). Proper management of this roadless area will perpetuate its wilderness character while providing the public with opportunities for wilderness-like experiences.

Open space/scenic zone lands at Montana de Oro will be managed as transitional land use zones. Preservation of their open character and scenic qualities is necessary for viewshed protection, but these areas do not have the high values that would place them in the natural/cultural preservation zone. They do have substantial barriers to development, especially steep slopes and poor soils. Open space/scenic zone lands are best suited for vegetation management programs and may be rezoned to expand protection or development as needed.

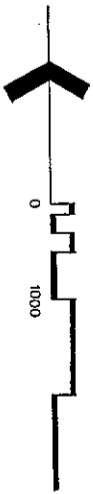
Recreation facilities zone lands have few natural or scenic qualities that need protection and have no major development constraints. They are lands that will allow recreation use or facility development without adversely affecting neighboring land uses.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
THE RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION

PACIFIC OCEAN
LAND USE PLAN
MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK



- LAND USE ZONES**
- ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION ZONE
 - NATURAL / CULTURAL PRESERVATION ZONE
 - OPEN SPACE / SCENIC ZONE
 - PRIMITIVE / ROADLESS ZONE
 - RECREATION FACILITIES ZONE



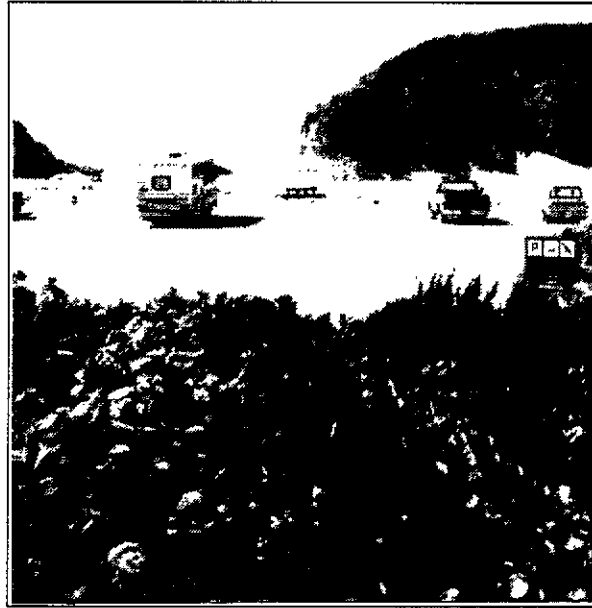
5 MAP
DRAWING NO.
23908

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK
LAND USE PLAN
GENERAL PLAN - LAND USE ELEMENT

RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
APPROVED _____ DATE _____

REVISIONS	DATE	DESIGNED BY
Lay-out changed from vertical to horizontal format.	3-88	JILL VANNEMAN
		DRAWN JILL VANNEMAN
		CHECKED DON HOOK

Facilities Element



Existing and proposed facilities at Montana de Oro State Park will provide continued opportunities for diverse recreational uses of low to moderate intensity.

The Facilities Element identifies existing facilities and recommends elimination or improvement of some of them as well as the development of new ones. Carrying capacity of the park as determined by the design capacity of the facilities is discussed. Architectural design concepts and development priorities are proposed.

For optimum public access and use of the park, facilities in parks are provided that relate directly to recreational use (campgrounds, trails, visitor centers, picnic areas) or indirectly to support visitor use (restrooms, parking). Maintenance and administrative facilities are necessary for operation of the park. (See the Glossary of Terms, Appendix C, for definition of terms used to describe various state park facilities.)

Carrying Capacity

The Public Resources Code requires that the carrying capacity of the unit be established as a part of the general plan process and that subsequent attendance at the unit be held within the limits established by the general plan. The carrying capacity for recreation lands is the number of persons for which an area can provide recreation while maintaining the conditions that originally made it desirable for that purpose. This definition implies that the natural characteristics of an area are of primary importance and form the basis for its management.

The concept of carrying capacity as it is sometimes used gives the false impression that there is an *a priori* method of determining the capacity for any given parcel of land or natural resource. However, carrying capacity is not a primary factor in the interaction of people and a resource but a derived or dependent factor that is subject to precise definition after the fixed limits of park development have been determined. The parameters of carrying capacity are the elements of park planning and development that determine how people are to be *accommodated* and *contained* within the park.

The Allowable Use Intensity Map of the Resource Element is the first step in determining carrying capacity. It indicates areas in which resource sensitivities and constraints will affect development planning, correlating resource sensitivities with certain types and intensities of use. The Facilities Element proposes facilities, locates them in the park, and sets limits on their capacity based on the constraints and guidelines established by the allowable use intensities (Resource Element), and the land use goals, recommendations, and land use zones (Land Use Element).

The **design capacity** reflects the planning team's concept of "best use" of a given area. Capacities are set by planners based on past experience and professional judgment, as well as available research results. The initial consideration of general planning takes into account the character of the resource and its natural properties and the best manner in which the resource can be enjoyed. Design capacity considers engineering evaluations for construction, utilities placement, access, circulation of vehicles and people, and adequate water supplies and garbage and sewage disposal. The design capacity is the absolute number of spaces allotted for people in the general plan. It includes the total number of campsites, parking spaces, picnic sites, etc. The design capacity will determine to a large extent the proposed use of the park, but until actual use occurs, capacity cannot be fully established.

The **maximum capacity** is the upper limit of people who can be accommodated in the developed areas of the park if the threat to the development or to the surrounding natural resource is ignored. Maximum capacity under some

circumstances can exceed the design capacity, as when a campsite designed for a single family is occupied by a group of 10 to 12 people. When people spill out of the developed areas of the park and spontaneous development occurs in unplanned areas, the park is over capacity. Parking, camping, viewing, and other activities conducted at unauthorized locations are all symptoms of over capacity, as are excessive traffic accidents or law enforcement problems that are beyond the ability of the regular staff to handle. The park has exceeded its carrying capacity.

The **optimal capacity** for park areas centers on two concepts: (1) that under conditions of optimal capacity, the natural resource adjacent to developed facilities does not degenerate faster than it can regenerate itself or be regenerated (by planting, seeding, slope stabilization, etc.); (2) that the development is not deteriorating faster than it can be maintained, given the economic resources available.

The carrying capacity of a park is determined by the capacity of the developments and facilities, and whether occupation will be maximum or optimum is determined by the extent to which occupancy affects maintenance, including maintenance of the natural resource. There is no magic formula for determining the carrying capacity of a natural area, and for the park the determination can be made only after the developments are incorporated into it, for without them the concept of carrying capacity has no practical meaning. For this reason, one of the stated land use objectives is to monitor recreation use and periodically reassess the ability of the resources to absorb the use they are receiving, and to adjust use as necessary to adequately protect resource values.

At Montana de Oro, the number of parking spaces, camping, picnic, and day-use areas provided is the major factor that determines carrying capacity and density of use because most visitors gain access to the park by motor vehicle. Less than 2% now come by other means (foot, bicycle, horse, or boat), with a projected increase to less than 5% by the year 2010. The term "**Instantaneous capacity**" is used to indicate the design capacity of all facilities at the moment of peak use. It may be stated in terms of vehicles or people; estimates are that each vehicle accounts for 3.2 visitors. The present instantaneous capacity at the park is 596 vehicles or 1,907 visitors plus a 100-student capacity at the environmental education center. The proposed capacity is 717 vehicles (including two 40-person buses) or 2,328 visitors (plus 100 environmental center students).

Summary of Existing and Proposed Facilities

Facilities and Amenities		Existing	Proposed	Total
Proposed Entrance	Signs	1	0	1
	Contact station	0	1	1
	Telephone	0	1	1
Existing Army Road Beach Access	Parking spaces	50-70	-50-70	0
Proposed Sandsplit Beach Access	Parking spaces	0	50-100	50-100
	Comfort station	0	1	1
	Public telephone	0	1	1
	Trail (linear feet)	1,500	0	1,500
	Access road (linear feet)	0	3,000	3,000
Existing Hazard Beach Access	Parking spaces	80-100	10	10
	Trail (linear feet)	1,000	0	1,000
Proposed Hazard Canyon Beach Access	Parking spaces	0	80-100	80-100
	Comfort station	0	1	1
	Public telephone	0	1	1
	Trail (linear feet)	1,000	0	1,000
Existing Hazard Canyon Horse Camp	Parking spaces	60	20	80
	Group campsites	6	0	6
	Campfire pits	6	0	6
	Group-sized grills	1	5	6
	Pit toilets	0	2	2
	Combination building	0	1	1
	Hose bibbs (water faucets)	5	2	7
	Public telephone	0	1	1
	Access road (linear feet)	1,500 (a)	3,000	3,000
	Horse corrals	29	0	29
Existing Employee Residence Area	Trailer pads	2	-2	0
	Picnic sites	0	20	20
	Parking spaces	6 (b)	14	20
	Hose bibbs	4	-2	2
	Comfort station	1	1	1
Existing Camp KEEP Area	Environmental education center	1 (c)	-1	0
	Trailer pads	0	2	2
	Maintenance buildings	0	1	1
	Storage area	0	1	1
	Horse barn/corral	0	1	1
Proposed Environmental Center/Camp	Horse barn/corrals	2	-2	0
	Environmental center (d)	0	1	1
	Access road (linear feet)	0	250	250

Facilities Element

Facilities and Amenities Existing Proposed Total

Proposed South Hazard Canyon Campground	Environmental campsites	2	-2	0
	Auto campsites	0	50-75	50-75
	Compost toilets	2	-2	0
	Combination building	0	2	2
	Campfire center	0	1	1
	Hose bibbs	0	6-10	6-10
Existing Spooner Cove Day-Use Area	Parking spaces	144	0	144
	Pit toilets	2	-2	0
	Comfort station/outside shower	0	1	1
	Picnic sites	15	10	25
	Hose bibbs	0	3	3
	Beach stairway	1	0	1
	Disabled beach access (linear feet)	0	150	150
Existing Bluff Trail Parking Area	Parking spaces	15	5	20
Existing Islay Creek Campground	Park office	1	0	1
	Parking spaces	10	0	10
	Bus parking spaces	0	2	2
	Interpretive center	0	1	1
	Historic milk house	1	0	1
	Quonset hut	1	-1	0
	Maintenance/storage building	1	-1	0
	Overflow camping spaces	25	-25	0
	Auto campsites	51	0	51
	Campfire center	1	0	1
	Pit toilets	9	-9	0
	Comfort stations	0	3	3
	Hose bibbs	2	4	6
Existing Coon Creek Day-Use Area	Parking spaces	40	0	40
	Pit toilets	2	-2	0
	Comfort station	0	1	1
	Picnic sites	0	15-20	15-20
Circulation (Miles)	Paved road	6	0	6
	Fire/service roads	3	0	3
	Designated trails	23	10 (e)	33
	Trail rest areas	0	1	1
	Pit toilets	3	1	4
	Roadside parking spaces	75	0	75

(a) To be removed and relocated.

(b) Includes parking for environmental campsites and residences.

(c) Temporary/portable facilities.

(d) To be determined by future concession contract.

(e) A rough estimate only of the mileage of potential new trails.

Priorities for Facility Development

The three levels of priority assigned to the proposed facility changes at Montana de Oro generally reflect the level of need. Individual actions in each group are presented in a recommended sequence. However, many factors can influence this development program and it should be treated only as a guideline. As facilities are developed, it will be prudent to evaluate how they are used and how the resources are absorbing use, and to adjust priorities for facility development as necessary to adequately protect resource values.

Priority 1 actions, those that should be made in the near future, represent changes needed to protect visitor health and safety or to remedy recreation use situations or operational control problems that lead directly to resource impacts and destruction. Second priority actions represent relatively minor changes to existing conditions, will require little or no additional park staff to operate and maintain, or must be accomplished prior to implementation of Priority 3 actions. Third priority actions will add new opportunities for recreation use to the park or require substantial funding and additional staffing to operate. Facilities deemed desirable but not necessarily essential are categorized as Priority 3, long-term action items.

Priority 1

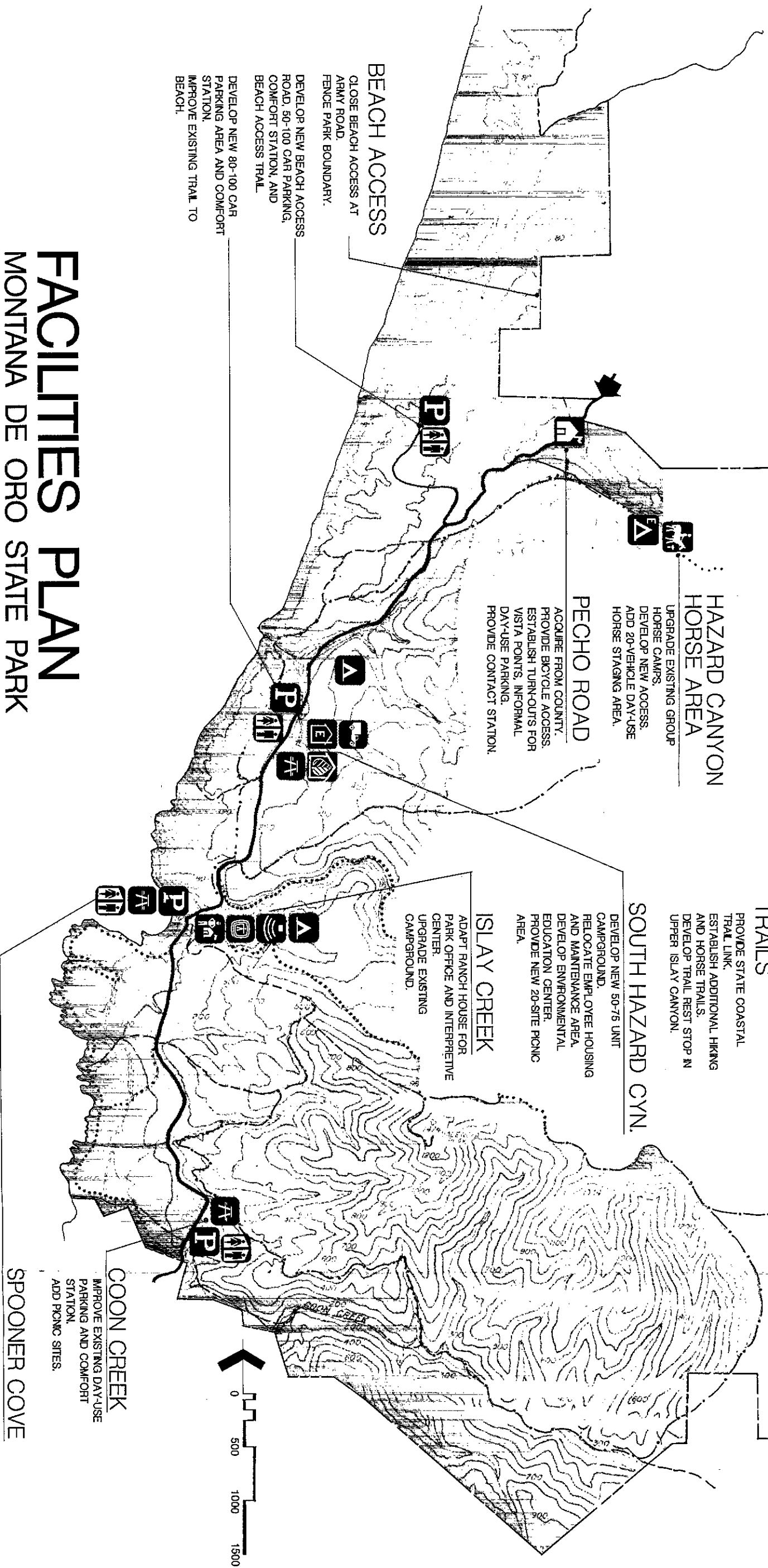
- Develop new Hazard Canyon beach access parking and trail.
- Eliminate existing roadside parking at Hazard Canyon.
- Develop new park entrance and contact station (acquire Pecho Valley Road).
- Develop new sandspit beach access road, parking, and trail.
- Eliminate existing Army Road parking and public beach access by fencing park boundary.
- Make safety improvement along Pecho Valley Road (acquire from county) and improve turnouts and vista points.
- Improve Bluff Trail parking area.

Priority 2

- Develop park office/interpretive center.
- Develop permanent environmental education center/camp by concessionaire.
- Improve Islay Creek campground.
- Relocate park maintenance facility.
- Develop bus parking and turnaround for interpretive center.
- Improve Spooner Cove day-use area.
- Improve Coon Creek day-use area.
- Develop California Coastal Trail link.
- Develop new riding/hiking trails.
- Improve existing Hazard Canyon Horse Camp.
- Develop new Hazard Canyon Horse Camp access road.
- Provide bicycle access through park.

Priority 3

- Develop new campground at South Hazard Canyon.
- Relocate existing employee/residence area.
- Develop new picnic area at South Hazard Canyon (existing employee/residence area).
- Develop Islay Canyon Trail rest area.
- Provide new equestrian staging area at Hazard Canyon Horse Camp.



BEACH ACCESS

CLOSE BEACH ACCESS AT ARMY ROAD. FENCE PARK BOUNDARY.
 DEVELOP NEW BEACH ACCESS ROAD, 50-100 CAR PARKING, COMFORT STATION, AND BEACH ACCESS TRAIL.
 DEVELOP NEW 80-100 CAR PARKING AREA AND COMFORT STATION.
 IMPROVE EXISTING TRAIL TO BEACH.

HAZARD CANYON HORSE AREA

UPGRADE EXISTING GROUP HORSE CAMPS. DEVELOP NEW ACCESS. ADD 20-VEHICLE DAY-USE HORSE STAGING AREA.

PECHO ROAD

ACQUIRE FROM COUNTY. PROVIDE BICYCLE ACCESS. ESTABLISH TURN-OUTS FOR VISTA POINTS, INFORMAL DAY-USE PARKING. PROVIDE CONTACT STATION.

TRAILS

PROVIDE STATE COASTAL TRAIL LINK. ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL HIKING AND HORSE TRAILS. DEVELOP TRAIL REST STOP IN UPPER ISLAY CANYON.

SOUTH HAZARD CYN.

DEVELOP NEW 50-75 UNIT CAMPGROUND. RELOCATE EMPLOYEE HOUSING AND MAINTENANCE AREA. DEVELOP ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER. PROVIDE NEW 20-SITE PICNIC AREA.

ISLAY CREEK

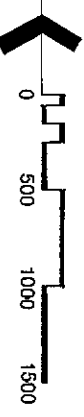
ADAPT RANCH HOUSE FOR PARK OFFICE AND INTERPRETIVE CENTER. UPGRADE EXISTING CAMPGROUND.

COON CREEK

IMPROVE EXISTING DAY-USE PARKING AND COMFORT STATION. ADD PICNIC SITES.

SPOONER COVE

IMPROVE ACCESS AND PARKING. INCREASE PICNIC SITES. IMPROVE BLUFF-TOP PARKING.



FACILITIES PLAN
MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
 THE RESOURCES AGENCY
 DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION

6	MAP	DRAWING NO. 23909	MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK		RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA		REVISIONS		DATE		03 DESIGNED88	
			FACILITIES PLAN		DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION						DRAWN JILL VANNEMAN	
			GENERAL PLAN - FACILITIES ELEMENT		APPROVED _____ DATE _____						CHECKED DON HOOK	

Facilities by Area

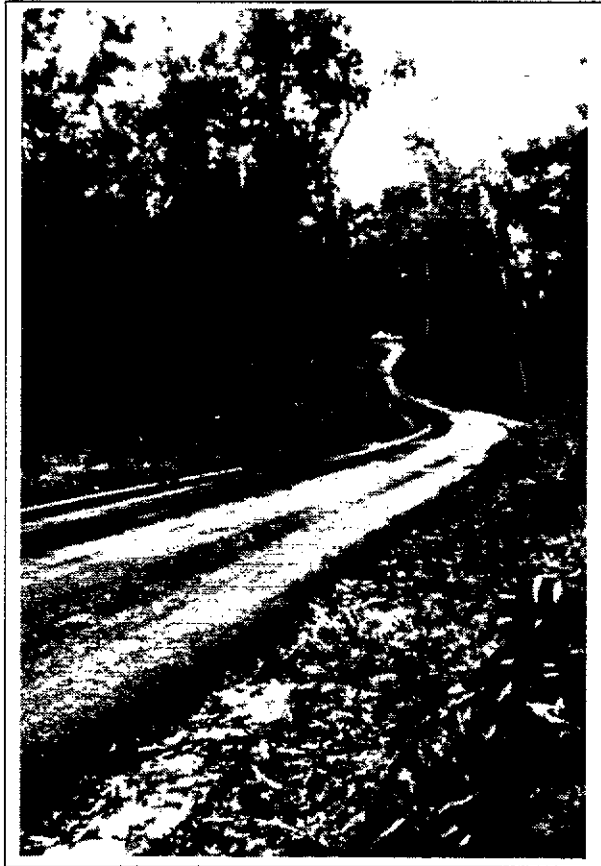
Existing and proposed visitor facilities are discussed here by use area. For each area, a description of the existing physical conditions, problems, and planning considerations is followed by the general plan's recommendations.

Pecho Valley Road

Pecho Valley Road is the only vehicle access into Montana de Oro and to the various park use areas. Problems regarding ownership of the road and the road's condition need to be resolved. Narrow, scenic, and winding, the road needs improvements to make it safer. It is also too narrow to safely accommodate bicycle lanes. One of the park's major problems is the staff's inability to control access to the park because the road is county-owned and there is no entrance station. Numerous turnouts are located off the road; some are popular vista points, others serve as small informal day-use parking areas for access to the beach and coastal trails. Some of these turnouts are hazardous because of poor sight distance or because parked cars encroach on the roadway.

The general plan recommends obtaining the road from the county. This will allow a formal park entrance and contact station to be developed to control public access as well as to allow park staff to make that first vital contact with the visitor, providing information about the park's facilities and important safety and resource protection rules and regulations. It will also enable the efficient collection of fees for both day and overnight park use.

Following improvements to Pecho Valley Road to provide safer traffic movement, existing turnouts should be evaluated for their safety and suitability as turnarounds, vista points, day-use parking or horse staging areas. In suitable areas, necessary improvements should be provided to formalize use (minor grading, surfacing, fencing, trash receptacles, interpretive signs, etc.). The remaining turnouts should be eliminated through installation of fencing, railing, or vehicle barriers.



Pecho Valley Road, narrow and scenic, is the only vehicular access into the park.

Pecho Valley Road Recommendations:

- Acquire Pecho Valley Road within the park from the county and develop a park entrance and contact station.
- Make safety improvements on Pecho Valley Road.
- Formalize existing turnouts.
- Provide bicycle access to the park by widening Pecho Valley Road or developing a separate paved bicycle trail.

Beach Access

The primary beach resource at Montana de Oro stretches from the mouth of Hazard Canyon northward to the tip of the sandspit. Beach use accounts for most of the day-use visitors to the park. Although no formal facilities have been developed to provide beach parking and access, two informal use areas as well as several turnouts along Pecho Valley Road perform this function and serve to disperse use along the length of the sandy beach.

• Sandspit Beach Access

The first of these informal use areas is located at the western end of Army Road near Sharks Inlet. Army Road is an unimproved and unmaintained public right-of-way through private property. Most visitors to the sandspit park here, although the less intrepid, fearful of the real possibility of becoming mired in the sand, park further back toward Pecho Valley Road where the ground is a little firmer. Peak use of the area is estimated at 50-70 vehicles.

Operational problems and resource damage have occurred because the area's isolated location and uncontrolled access attract nighttime use, illegal off-highway vehicle activity, and hunting. Unsightly vehicle tracks and scars, widespread destruction of fragile vegetation, erosion, and sand blowouts have been the result. The area's primary value is its significance as habitat of the state and federally listed endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat.

Because past attempts to acquire land to provide control of the area and prevent access from Army Road have been unsuccessful, the general plan recommends relocating parking for the northern section of the park's beach resource to a less sensitive site further south. A new access road can be developed off Pecho Valley Road on park land to provide the needed control that would prevent operational problems. The proposed parking site was impacted by its previous use by the Army as an artillery range. Old road base still remains and other existing site conditions (compacted soil and areas bare of vegetation) will minimize the environmental effects of initial development. An existing trail can be improved to provide pedestrian access to the beach from the parking area. Any further south from this location, the relatively shallow dunes give way to steep bluffs, making trail access from the parking area to the beach difficult and environmentally damaging.



Sandspit Beach Access

Recommendations:

- Acquire county-owned Army Road right-of-way within the park. Eliminate public vehicular access to the park from Army Road by fencing the park's boundary. Develop designated trails and pedestrian access from the residential subdivision at the northeast boundary. Restore the area's natural values and improve habitat for the endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat.

- Provide a new 50-100 vehicle sandspit parking area to the south of the artillery range triangle, with comfort station, telephone, and interpretive panels. Provide a designated access trail to the beach from the parking area to prevent dune erosion and discourage volunteer trails. Use an existing trail alignment and provide unobtrusive fencing and sandladders where necessary.

- Develop a new access road to the proposed new sandspit parking area from Pecho Valley Road, using an existing trail alignment as much as possible to minimize destruction of dune vegetation.

Uncontrolled vehicular activity at the end of Army Road has resulted in destruction of fragile vegetation, scarring and erosion, and loss of kangaroo rat habitat.

- **Hazard Canyon Beach Access**

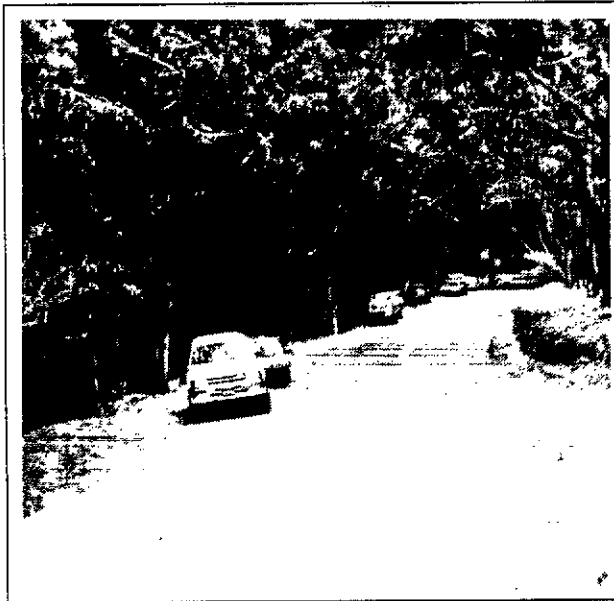
The Hazard Canyon beach access point consists of undesignated and indiscriminate parking along the ocean side of Pecho Valley Road in the narrow strip of land between the road edge and the steep drop-off to the canyon below. At peak use, as many as 100 cars may be found along the roadside, some encroaching onto the pavement, creating a situation that is unsightly and hazardous for both pedestrians and passing traffic.

At Hazard Canyon, as many as 100 cars may be parked along Pecho Valley Road on busy days, a hazardous situation for both pedestrians and traffic.



Steps and a trail to the beach have been developed on the northern side of the canyon within the creek bed itself. Years of foot traffic have destroyed the area's natural riparian vegetation, and an ever-widening trail and erosion have resulted at the mouth of the canyon from visitors' attempts to avoid wet soils.

The existing trail on the south side of the canyon will be improved to provide beach access for pedestrians from the proposed new parking area.



The plan recommends development of a new parking area and access trail on the south side of the canyon, in a relatively flat site that is now partially screened from the road by existing eucalyptus trees. Location of the



A new parking area off Pecho Valley Road will replace existing roadside parking for beach users at Hazard Canyon.

entrance into the proposed parking area needs to be carefully considered owing to problems of sight distance. Permeable surfacing should be considered as an alternative to paving for appearance and to prevent rapid runoff and erosion. For pedestrian beach access, utilization of the existing horse trail to the beach, which descends gradually down the canyon wall to the mouth of the creek, will avoid the impact of foot traffic through most of the creek bed.

Hazard Canyon Beach Access Recommendation:

- Develop a new 80-100 vehicle parking area off Pecho Valley Road on the south side of Hazard Canyon across from the existing entrance to Camp KEEP and the ranger residences. Provide a comfort station, public telephone, and interpretive panels. Eliminate the existing roadside parking and establish safe, informal parking for about 10 vehicles in its place.

- Improve the existing horse trail on the south side of Hazard Canyon to provide pedestrian access between the proposed parking area and the beach. Develop a stairway if necessary.

Hazard Canyon Horse Camp

The horse camp is a popular use area that can accommodate up to six horse groups, a total of 50-60 vehicles including horse trailers. The area connects with the park's riding and hiking trails and serves as a day-use staging area for trail rides as well as a camp for overnight stays. The facilities are primitive and the parking informal. Each group camp includes nonpotable water (for the horses), pit toilet, picnic tables, campfire ring, and horse stalls.

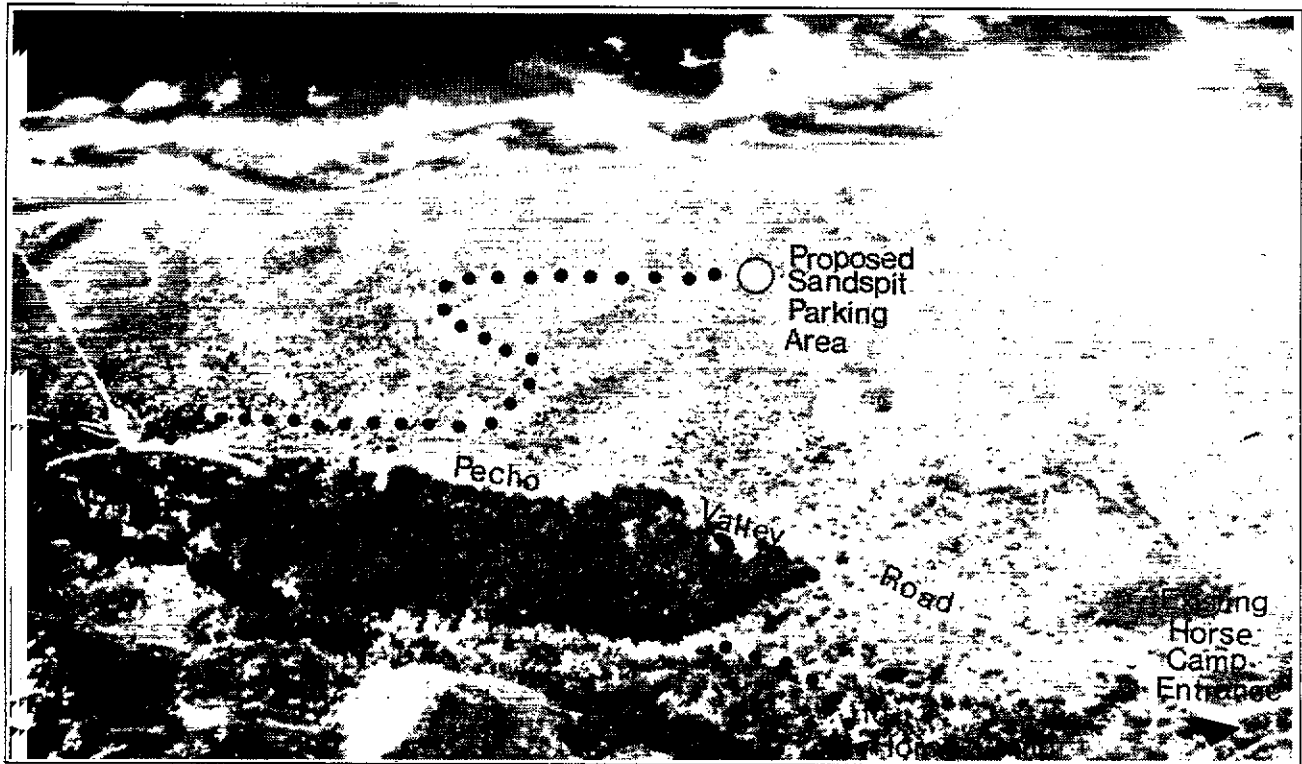
The plan recommends upgrading the facilities somewhat. Better definition and designation of camping and parking areas will improve the appearance of the areas as well as prevent destruction of vegetation and soil compaction associated with existing conditions. Surfacing of parking areas and native landscaping will reduce dust problems. Improved sanitary facilities, development of potable running water, and a public telephone are recom-

mended. When additional trails and long-distance trail connections are developed, the plan recommends establishment of an equestrian staging area with parking for about 20 cars and trailers and a restroom/shower building. However, no facilities for increased use of this area should be developed until access road and water problems are solved.

Currently, the only vehicle access into the area is a steep, narrow, unpaved, one-lane road cut into the canyon wall. The entrance off Pecho Valley Road is located just around a curve and across from one of the park's most popular vista points. The combination of poor sight distance and movement of cars pulling on and off the



Improvements at Hazard Canyon Horse Camp include better definition of parking and camping areas, improved sanitary facilities, and potable water.



New access roads into Hazard Canyon Horse Camp and to the new sandspit beach parking area will utilize the alignments of existing trails as much as possible. (Proposed road alignments, shown as dotted lines, are approximate only, subject to further study.)

road intensifies the potential for accidents. The entrance area is also the only location along Pecho Valley Road where the combined road width and adjacent flat areas would allow development of a park entrance and contact station. As a result, the general plan recommends development of a new access road into the Hazard Canyon Horse Camp area, utilizing a portion of the existing "Bloody Nose Trail." This trail is the width of a two-lane road through the eucalyptus trees. A new access road here, although longer, will be a less costly and less environmentally damaging alternative than widening the existing access road. In addition, it avoids the problems associated with the current entrance off Pecho Valley Road. The affected section of horse trail will need to be relocated.

Hazard Canyon Horse Camp Recommendations:

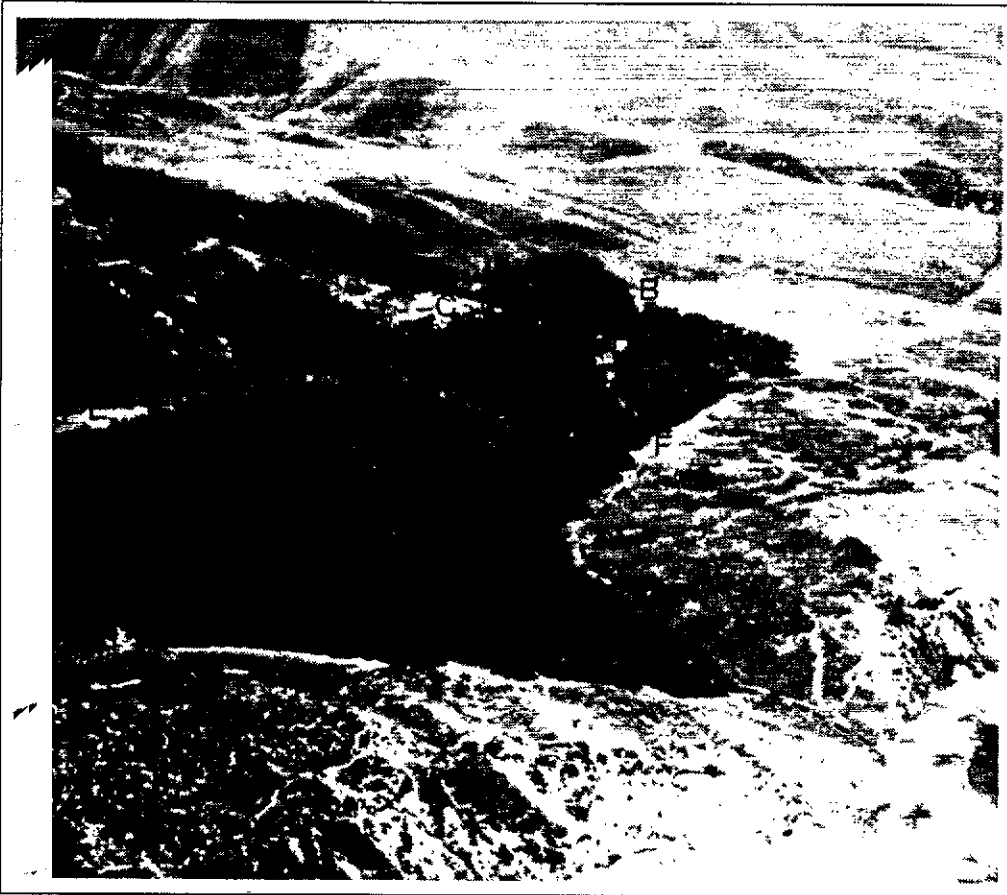
- Enhance and upgrade existing camp facilities. Designate parking areas with fencing/barrier posts and surfacing, and landscape/revegetate. Provide improved sanitary facilities, pottable running water, public telephone, and interpretive panels.
- Develop a new road access using a portion of the Bloody Nose Trail, and relocate the affected section of trail.
- Provide a new equestrian trail staging area for 20 cars and trailers, with shower-restroom building.

**South Hazard
Canyon Use
Area**

This area consists of four sites east of Pecho Valley Road on the south side of Hazard Canyon, including the existing employee residence area, the Camp KEEP site, and two currently undeveloped sites proposed for a new family campground and a new environmental education center/camp.

Rather than dispersing intensive new recreation development throughout the park, the general plan recommends concentrating it in this area for several important reasons:

1. The area's physical characteristics will permit development. The sites do not have high natural values or substantial barriers to development (i.e., are relatively flat and accessible), are topographically located or vegetatively screened to minimize the visual impact of development, and will permit development without adversely affecting neighboring land use areas.
2. Concentrating development will minimize the cost and effects of providing water and sewage disposal, two major development constraints at this park.
3. The location is very accessible to the park's primary beach resource, located north of the mouth of Hazard Canyon. The ocean is one of Montana de Oro's major attractions, and the sandy beach can accommodate intensive recreation use not possible in the park's other, more sensitive coastal areas.
4. Concentrating development, rather than dispersing it, maximizes open space, preserving the park's scenic qualities and natural character.



- A-Islay Creek Campground
- B-Proposed Environmental Education Center
- C-Existing Camp KEEP/
Proposed Employee Residence and Park Maintenance Area
- D-Existing Employee Residence Area/
Proposed New Picnic Area
- E-Proposed New Family Campground
- F-Proposed New Beach Parking Area
- G-Beach Access Trail

• Environmental Education Camp

The existing Camp KEEP program is a popular, well-organized educational program operated by the Kern County Office of Education for Kern County school children. It is operated by special event permit in temporary structures and portable trailers. The program accommodates groups of 90-100 children at two-week intervals nine months a year.

The general plan recommends development of a permanent public environmental education center on a new site just south of the existing Camp KEEP site to operate year round with opportunities for participation by a wider, less exclusive public than is now served by the Camp KEEP program. The plan recommends that this facility be developed by a concessionaire, nonprofit corporation, or other suitable organization. The plan also recommends that Kern County

continue to operate its existing facility until the new permanent center is developed or the existing KEEP site is needed for implementation of the plan's other recommendations.

The proposed site for the new facility is a relatively flat site above Pecho Valley Road, sloping gently downward toward the base of the hill behind it, and screened by vegetation to the north. The site has been impacted by agricultural use and grazing in the past. A large horse corral is located at the northern end of the site.

An important consideration in recommending this site as the appropriate location for a permanent environmental education facility is that, while it is easily accessible from Pecho Valley Road, it is also physically separated from the other public facilities to be developed in the general vicinity, especially from the proposed new campground. The security and safety of the children who will use the proposed facility is of primary importance. A site physically separated from other



The unsightly employee residence trailers will be relocated and the area will be developed for day-use picnicking.

use areas can greatly aid the need to minimize opportunities for contact with the general park public. Since physical constraints will make it necessary to utilize the road that passes directly through the existing Camp KEEP site for access to the proposed public campground, a new and separate location for the proposed permanent environmental education facility must be provided.

Environmental Education Camp Recommendations:

- Develop a permanent environmental education center/camp.

• **Employee Residence Area**

The existing employee residences are poorly located and visually unattractive. They detract from the scenic quality of the park and views from Pecho Valley Road. The general plan recommends relocating them to the site now occupied by Camp KEEP in conjunction with the relocation of the park's maintenance and storage areas. In their place, the plan calls for development of a small picnic area of about 20 sites, providing a formal day-use area with tables and stoves, yet with relatively close access to the beach.

Employee Residence Area Recommendations:

- Relocate and consolidate the existing employee residence area and park maintenance/storage functions to the existing Camp KEEP site.
- Develop a 20-site day-use picnic area with parking, tables, stoves, comfort station, and interpretive panels.

• **South Hazard Canyon Campground**

To accommodate the increasing demand for camping, the general plan recommends development of a 50-75 unit family campground north of the existing Camp KEEP site. The proposed location is another of the few developable sites within the unit. It is relatively flat, well screened from view — from Pecho Valley Road or the coastal terraces by topography and a thick fringe of vegetation, yet readily accessible from the existing road into Camp KEEP. The two existing environmental camp-sites will be removed.

South Hazard Canyon Campground Recommendations:

- Develop a 50-75 unit family campground with restroom/shower buildings and campfire center.

- Improve vehicle and trail access from Pecho Valley Road.

The proposed new campground site is located north of Camp KEEP and is well-screened from Pecho Valley Road by a thick fringe of trees.



Spooner Cove

The Bluff Trail parking area overlooking Spooner Cove is one of the park's most popular vista points; essentially a roadside pull-out, its appearance and safety need to be improved.



Informal beach-level facilities include portable toilets, picnic tables, unpaved parking for approximately 150 vehicles, and a stairway to Pecho Valley Road above. This stairway is not readily visible from the road. Pedestrians often miss it and end up walking down the narrow, steep stretch of road from the campground. Minor access improvements for safety will improve sight distance for exiting vehicles.

In keeping with the department's coastal erosion policy, all facilities developed at Spooner Cove must be of a movable or expendable nature. Located at beach level, the area is subject to storm damage and occasional inundation following heavy storms. Therefore, although better definition and more efficient design of the parking area will improve its appearance and allow more picnic sites, the area should not be paved. Likewise, while the appearance and quality of the sanitary facilities can be enhanced, no permanent structure should be developed.

The general plan recommends that the department pursue the designation of offshore lands as an underwater park in recognition of the significant resource and recreation values of Hazard Reef stretching from the mouth of Hazard Canyon to Point Buchon. (This will require acquisition of a long-term lease from the State Lands Commission.) In concert with this designation (assuming the lands will be acquired), minimal accommodations for scuba/skin divers will be provided at Spooner Cove because access to the water is easiest here for transporting heavy equip-

ment and car-top boats. Proposed amenities include a cold-water outdoor shower and changing room in conjunction with the sanitary facilities. An attractive screened enclosure can be designed to meet these needs as well as hide the toilet buildings.

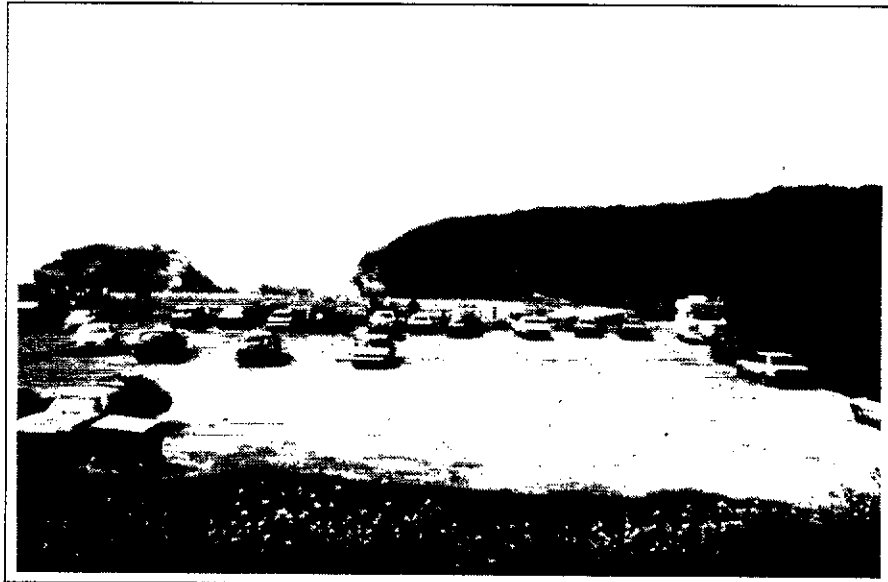
Spooner Cove is also the only location in the park where reasonable accommodation can be made for access by disabled persons to the beach. A hard-surfaced walk or ramp, or portable sand ladder, should be provided for wheelchair beach access.

The Bluff Trail parking area overlooks Spooner Cove and accommodates about 15 vehicles. Essentially a roadside pull-out, this is a popular park vista point, especially for watching the sun set. The need here is to define the parking area to make it safer and more attractive. The area is not quite large enough to accommodate the use it receives at peak periods. Some minor grading and slight realignment of Pecho Valley Road eastward can solve these problems. A low railing or unobtrusive barrier should be provided at the bluff edge of the parking area.

Better definition and more efficient design of the parking area at Spooner Cove will free up space to increase the number of picnic sites while improving the appearance of the area.

Spooner Cove Recommendations:

- Upgrade and enhance area: define and control parking, improve sanitary facilities, add interpretive panels, and sign the beach stairway from the road.
- Add new facilities: 10 new picnic sites with tables and stoves, beach access for the disabled, and outdoor shower and changing room.
- Enhance and upgrade the Bluff Trail parking area: increase capacity, safety, and appearance.



Islay Creek

Existing facilities include the historic Spooner ranch house and milk house, a parking area, an unattractive quonset hut used for maintenance storage, an overflow parking area for about 25 self-contained vehicles, a campfire center, and a 51-unit primitive campground with pit toilets. Potable water is trucked in and stored in large tanks. In upper Islay Canyon, an historic barn is located near the park's eastern boundary.

Islay Creek Recommendations:

- Adapt the ranch house for dual use as an interpretive center/ park office.
- Remove the quonset hut and eliminate overflow camping. Use the area to develop a bus parking and turn-around area for the interpretive center.
- Enhance and upgrade the existing campground: improve sanitary facilities, provide potable running water and better screening using native landscaping for privacy between sites.
- Provide a trail rest area in upper Islay Canyon by rehabilitating the historic barn, if economically feasible, or by removing it and providing a shade structure.

Milkhouse

Proposed Bus Parking & Turnaround (quonset hut to be removed)

Ranch House/ Visitor Center

Spooner Cove Parking Area

Pecho Valley Road



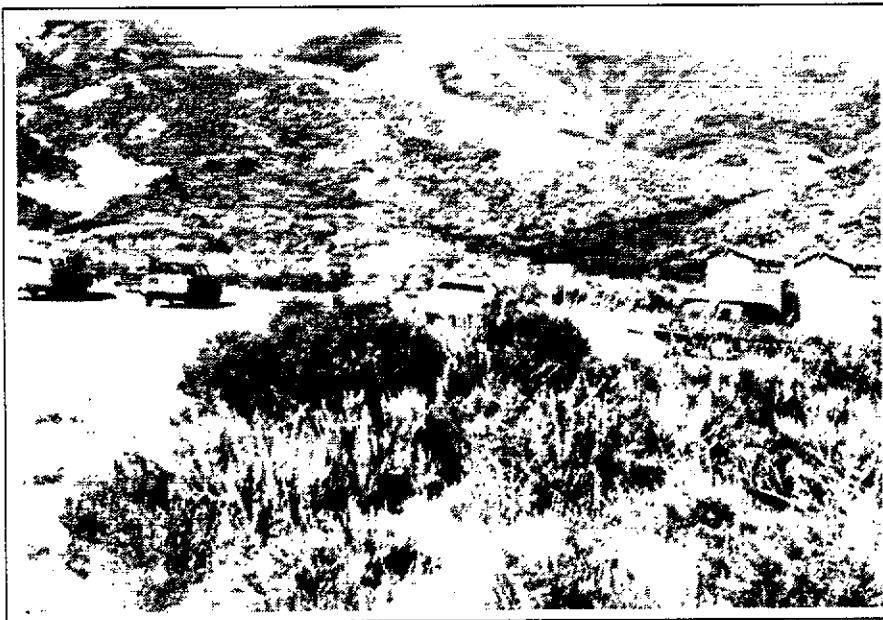
Coon Creek

This day-use area is located on the coastal terrace at the park's southern boundary. It provides trailhead parking for both the Coon Creek Trail and the southern end of the Bluff Trail. It also acts as a turnaround because the public road ends here. The size of the parking area is actually a little large for the amount of use it provides. The appearance of the area could be improved by reducing the

size of the parking area and revegetating, while still accommodating the same number of cars. Vehicle controls, railing or barriers around the perimeter, surfacing to reduce dust, improved sanitary facilities, trail signing, and interpretive panels should also be provided. If, in the future, public access to the Field Ranch and Coon Creek beach becomes available, it would be appropriate to provide a small day-use picnic area with stoves, tables, and potable water.

Coon Creek Recommendations:

- Improve parking, surfacing, and sanitary facilities; provide trail signing, interpretive panels, and 10 picnic sites.



The appearance of the Coon Creek day-use area can be improved by reducing the size of the parking area, landscaping with native vegetation, and

Trails

The park has about 26 miles of trail (14 miles of riding and hiking trails including park service roads, and 12 miles of hiking-only trails). They provide foot and horse access to various destinations within the park — the ridges and mountain peaks, the upper reaches of the canyons, the beach, and the coastal terraces and bluffs. The plan recommends linking up existing trails in the park to provide a continuous linear coastal trail through the park, enabling a future connection with the State Coastal Trail Corridor.

The general plan suggests formulation of a task force composed of departmental staff, park volunteers, and trail users to assist the department in preparing a trail management plan that would:

- Evaluate the condition of existing trails.
- Recommend necessary maintenance, erosion control, or management measures (brush clearing, water bars, revegetation, protection of fossil resources, trail realignment) for improving the existing trail system.
- Study and recommend new trails or trail links, and trail camps.
- Determine the suitability of existing and new trails for various types of users.

Potential future public access to the Field Ranch and BLM lands south and southeast of the park expands the possibility for long-distance trails and backpacking, which should be implemented if the potential becomes reality.

Due to the unit's highly erodible soils and trail erosion problems, horses have been restricted for many years to certain trails in the park that are less susceptible to damage by the heavier impacts of horse use. Increased conflicts between trail users and accelerated trail erosion have been attributed to the recent advent of mountain bikes to the trails. The use of mountain bikes on back-country trails is an issue being faced throughout the state. Until the department finds a resolution or develops a policy for the issue, or until a comprehensive trail management plan is prepared, the general plan recommends restricting mountain bike use to service roads.



The park's existing trails are very popular; in addition to improvement of existing trails, the general plan recommends the addition of new trails.

Trail Recommendations:

- Improve the existing trail system and develop additional hiking and equestrian trails (consider trails to lands south of the park if public access becomes available).
- Develop a continuous coastal trail through the park for future connection with the State Coastal Trail Corridor.

Architectural Design Concepts

The following concepts, some of which the department has established statewide, will provide standards and guidelines for the design of facilities at Montana de Oro State Park. These concepts are intended to conserve natural resources, assure opportunities for use of facilities for disabled persons, and develop facilities compatible with the environment.

- Design and construct architectural structures that respond to the need for conservation of water, energy, and other resources.
- Provide outdoor furniture constructed with native materials wherever possible.
- Encourage the conservation of non-renewable resources and promote the research, development, and use of various alternative energy sources in meeting park utility requirements. For example, solar space heating, solar water heating, and skylights will be used where practical.
- Design and construct facilities, including structures, walls, and ramps, to be accessible and usable by physically disabled persons.
- Emphasize the use of wood and masonry materials. Roofs are to be fire retardant.
- Emphasize harmony between the building and site.

Utility Concerns

This information is meant to provide a general background of the capabilities and problems related to providing utilities for proposed park development. Further studies and negotiations with utility providers will be required based on more comprehensive development plans for implementation of the general plan's proposals.

Power: Pacific Gas and Electric Company provides electricity to the park. Service extensions are available.

Gas: Natural gas service is not available. Liquid propane gas is used in the employee residence area, Camp KEEP, and Spooner ranch house.

Telephone: Pacific Bell currently provides service to the park.

Water: The water supply at the park presents a problem. Water at the Islay Creek campground is trucked in from Morro Bay State Park and stored in three large tanks. Of the two wells at the park, only one provides potable water. The well on the hill above Camp KEEP delivers potable water to the environmental camp, the employee residence area, and adjacent horse corral site. Well water at the Hazard Canyon Horse Camp is nonpotable, but is used in the

camp's water troughs for the horses. Water at the Spooner ranch house is nonpotable, drafted from the creek.

Two year-round streams flow in the park, Coon Creek and Islay Creek. However, both creeks support anadromous fish populations, and the Resource Element specifically prohibits water diversion that will significantly affect the park's water features and the ecosystems they support.

The three small water companies in the Los Osos Valley serve only the local communities. They cannot meet the park's water demands, and hook-up would be uneconomical.

Preliminary engineering evaluations identified only two alternative solutions for future development: 1) continue to truck in water and provide sufficient storage; 2) build a water treatment plant for treating well water and expand the water supply system within the Islay Creek and Hazard Canyon areas.

Sewage Disposal:

Almost all existing public sanitary facilities in the park are pit toilets. The exceptions are the four environmental campsites where compost toilets are used. The park office has one flush toilet and septic tank. Kern County's environmental camp and the employee residence area utilize a septic tank and leach field system. Preliminary engineering evaluations recommend development of a septic tank system with an evaporation pond at the Islay Creek and Hazard Canyon Horse Camp area. Further study and tests are needed before any changes or new development occur.

Interpretive Element



Montana de Oro's spectacular natural resources provide a wealth of subjects for interpretation.

Interpretation in a state park attempts to enhance visitor enjoyment by stimulating interest and promoting understanding and appreciation of the resources. This Interpretive Element provides guidance for ongoing and future interpretive development at Montana de Oro State Park. It identifies interpretive themes, proposes facilities and programs appropriate for their presentation, and establishes priorities for implementation.

Interpretive Considerations

Environmental Influences

The quality of the recreational experience at Montana de Oro State Park is directly proportional to the esthetic appeal of the environment in which it takes place. Rain, wind, cold temperatures, cloudiness, and heavy fog influence visitation to the

unit as well as the types of interpretive facilities and programs that can be developed. The corrosive and abrasive effects of salt- and sand-laden sea breezes must be considered in the design, placement, and construction of interpretive facilities. Vandalism can be a problem, and interpretive development should be designed and placed to minimize this risk. Interpretive consideration should be given to the safety of the visitor as well as to the preservation of the unit's resources. The ocean can present potential hazards to beach users. Dangerous rip currents and sleeper waves can be confusing, frightening, or even fatal to unwary swimmers. Beach users can also have unpleasant encounters with poisonous jellyfish and stingrays as well as less natural beach litter, such as broken glass and hot coals covered by sand.

The fragile nature of the resources at Montana de Oro imposes some limitations on interpretive use. Areas in the park have various restrictions on levels of allowable use. These restrictions are placed

on the park by the Resource Element in an effort to prevent the deterioration of the environment. Consequently, the location and type of interpretive activities must support those limitations.

Where the bluffs and hillsides are high and steep at Montana de Oro, erosion is sometimes in evidence, the result of natural processes at work, often accelerated by human activities. Dune erosion and destruction of the natural dune environment have similarly been increased because of unplanned "volunteer" trails and roads. Revegetation of destabilized dunelands and other areas with species indigenous to the unit will be an ongoing concern of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Seasonal events such as winter gray whale migrations, the roosting of monarch butterflies, and the spring wildflower bloom increase visitation. These occasions should be noted in the park.



Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry. Seasonal events such as the spring wildflower bloom increase visitation and these occasions should be noted in the park.

Visitors, Their Needs and Expectations

The visitors' principal needs and expectations are a readily accessible, affordable, clean, safe, and scenic spot in which to pursue their chosen forms of recreation. Most day users focus on either the park's beaches or the bluffs and mountains as the center for their recreation. The average beach-goer appears to come motivationally and physically equipped to spend a day of active or passive recreation along a stretch of sand and surf, while hikers, mountain bicyclists, and horseback riders look to the rest of the park for their enjoyment. It seems relatively uncommon for these two major groups of visitors to take full advantage of all the different kinds of recreational and educational resources offered by Montana de Oro. An important interpretive challenge will be to create an integrated interpretive program that can serve the specific needs of these two publics and yet also encourage the full use of the entire park's resources.



A prime visitor need is a clear orientation to what is available to see and do, including when and where special activities are being conducted. Although not a strong expectation of the average visitor, interpretation can enhance the public's enjoyment and appreciation of the parklands as well as promote safety. From the department's point of view, interpretation is an excellent tool for presenting resource and visitor protection information as it explains the reasons behind rules and thus encourages compliance.

Visitors of all ages come to see Montana de Oro State Park. People

come in family groups; individually; in organized church, conservation, and scout groups; from day camps, as well as from public and private schools. Most visitors are relatively uninformed about the natural and cultural history of the unit, although a small percentage are biologists, geologists, or other students of natural history.

Evidences of Montana de Oro's geologic history are revealed throughout the park. Interpretation of these physical features may aid the visitor in appreciating the fascinating geomorphic influences that built and shaped the landscape.

Interpretive Period

The department will interpret a flow of history at Montana de Oro State Park, from geologic times to the present — whether or not the whole spectrum of change is actually presented to the public.



The coast is a dynamic place, affected by storms, erosion, and both the constant movement and seasonal transport of sand.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes for Montana de Oro State Park separate into three loosely connected groups: resources, recreation, and management and safety (specific themes may fit more than one of these categories). Although the scope of interpretive development will not be extensive in many parts of this unit, a range of appropriate interpretive themes has been presented in this section to provide flexibility for future interpretation using a variety of media.

Resources

There is a wealth of resource-related themes to interpret at Montana de Oro State Park. Natural history themes can be interpreted in two ways: through ecological associations and also through singular outstanding species. These approaches address both the interrelatedness of associated species and the uniqueness of some of those same species. In some instances, themes covering resource-oriented topics have ramifications that aid in management of the unit and protection of the resources.

Primary Theme:

The Ever-Changing Coast

The coast is a dynamic place. Interpretation will encompass the constant motion of sand particles, their movement upcoast, downcoast, and offshore, and the seasonal transport of sand with its impact on the coastal beach. In addition, the geologic forces that uplifted the marine terraces and formed the coastal bluffs will be explained.

Primary Theme:

The Resourceful Life on the Beach

The range of habitats found at and around the beach should be interpreted for visitors, with emphasis on how the physical and vegetative make-up of each area determines what wildlife will be present.

Sub-Themes:

The Underwater Community

This theme will interpret the rich and varied sealife found offshore of Montana de Oro State Park. It will draw particular attention to species that scuba divers may encounter while underwater here.

The Mini-World of Tidepools

Interpretation will describe the tidepool environment, identify common plant and animal species, and explain how to explore pools safely. Indiscriminate removal of tidepool organisms is a persistent problem. Interpretation concerning the organisms and their value to the ecology of the ocean can help solve this enforcement problem.

The Sandy Beach Community

The varied lifestyles and lifeforms of the common invertebrates and vertebrate animals found on Montana de Oro beaches will be the focus. Interpretive approaches may include: "Life Under Foot" (in-

vertebrates that live in the sand in the wave wash zone); "A Bill for Every Purpose" (shorebirds, their specialized feeding techniques, size differences, and migratory patterns that minimize interspecies food competition); and "Flotsom and Jetsam" (evidences of various lifeforms found washed up on the beach, such as shark egg cases, jellyfish, and kelp, and the animals that scavenge these castaways).

Dune Ecology

Subjected to strong, salt-laden winds, high tides, and extremes in temperatures, plant and animal species that comprise the dune community of Montana de Oro have adapted well to their harsh environment. Interpretation will look at these "survivors" as well as present the concept of dune succession.

Bluff Ecology

This theme will examine the continually evolving (eroding) nature of the bluffs in this region of the California coastline and the plants and animals that are adapted to live on the bluff face.



The horny toad has adapted well to the harsh environment of the dunes. Interpretation of dune ecology will look at species of animal "survivors" as well as present the concept of dune succession.

The Wetlands: Home to Critters Great and Small

The prolific nature of a healthy estuarine system and its related uplands will be presented, focusing on tidal influence, major species present, and food chain relationships. The theme will also seek to foster an aesthetic appreciation of the marsh landscape and an understanding of the need to protect it.

Primary Theme:

Survival in the Chaparral and Scrub Communities

The plants and animals that live in the scrub and chaparral hillsides of Montana de Oro State Park are adapted to lack of water, heat, sudden strong rainfall, and periodic desiccating winds. Only species that can adapt to these arduous conditions have survived and live in the area. To some visitors, the brushy hillsides adjoining the park's canyons will seem devoid of life. Revelation of the many different life forms in these areas and the ways they have adapted to their harsh surroundings will be an important interpretive theme.

Sub-Themes:

The Intermittent Riparian Community

During winter and spring, and sometimes in the first part of summer, small creeks in the canyons of Montana de Oro flow, and the plants along their banks flourish. When the water dries up, the plants die back, and the animals that have depended on this source to survive find water elsewhere. Although this life cycle is brief, it is important to the ecology of the canyons as a whole, and its interpretation is part of understanding the adaptation for survival that is necessary in the natural world.

Eucalyptus Gone Wild

The dense forest of nonnative blue and red gums in the vicinity of Hazard Canyon were once part of a plantation begun in 1908 by Alexander Hazard. Although his plan to harvest them for forest products failed, the seedlings took root and adapted themselves to their new environment. Interpretation will explore the eucalyptus tree's history in the park and its impact on the native vegetation.

Primary Theme:

Special Species to Seek

Visitors will be directed toward unusual plant and animal species that may require some effort to find at Montana de Oro State Park.

Sub-Themes:

Watching for Whales and Other Marine Mammals

Montana de Oro State Park offers excellent views of the winter and spring migrations of the gray whale. Subjects that should be covered include: size, habits, diet, navigation; when, where, and why they migrate; clues to identification; courtship, and rearing of the young; a brief history of whaling, their threatened extinction, need for protection, and the present status of the species. In addition, identifying information about other marine mammals commonly observed along this coastline should be provided.

Tracking Down Mammals

Interpretation will help visitors recognize animal tracks and trails, holes and burrows, gnaw marks, droppings, and other clues in order to discover the presence of mammals in their different habitats.

A Bird for Each Habitat

Interpretation will examine the range of birds that make their home in the park, including least sandpipers, willets, great blue herons, sage sparrows, California quails, western meadowlarks, and Anna's and Allen's hummingbirds, to name a few.

Unusual Plants and Animals of Montana de Oro

Those species that are uncommon in their appearance or habits and are found nearby will be highlighted. Interpretive approaches may include: "Remarkable Grunion" (the unusual spawning habits of the grunion), "Monarch and Milkweed" (the monarch's long migration and clustering on "butterfly trees" and association with milkweed), the endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat and the Morro blue butterfly, endemic Morro Bay manzanita, and wildflowers that have a short blooming season, among other topics.

**Primary Theme:
Bygone Residents of
Montana de Oro**

The use of the beach and coastal environments by the Chumash and later settlers will be the focus for interpretation. This should incorporate comparative information about the various cultures (Native American, Hispanic, American), their different technology, and the changing use of the environment through time, from subsistence to commerce to recreation.

Sub-Themes:

The Chumash: Getting the Most Out of Their Natural World
A community of Native Americans called Chumash once depended for survival on the resources found in Montana de Oro State Park. Their lives revolved around the seasonal changes in the environment and the varying forms of resources available to them. Interpretation will provide visitors an understanding of these people and their long tradition of close interaction with the environment.



Interpretation will help visitors recognize animal tracks and trails, holes and burrows, gnaw marks, droppings, and other clues in order to discover the presence of mammals in their different habitats.

Ranchos on the Mexican Frontier

Property that now comprises Montana de Oro State Park was once a part of two Mexican ranchos, Rancho Pecho y Islay and Rancho Canada de los Osos. Both ranchos were eventually acquired by John Wilson, a naturalized Mexican citizen originally from Scotland, who married Ramona Carrillo de Pacheco. Interpretation will examine the operation of these ranchos on the frontier of Mexican California.

The Coastal Enterprise of Pioneer Settlers

Both Alden B. Spooner, Jr. and Alexander S. Hazard and their respective families transformed the rugged land that is now part of Montana de Oro State Park into successful cattle ranching, farming, dairy, and coastal shipping operations. Their enterprising and diversified approach to using the property in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will be the subject for interpretation.

Secondary Theme:

The State Park System Story

The development of the State Park System and how Montana de Oro State Park came into public ownership will be interpreted. This theme will treat the coast as a region, orienting visitors to resources and recreational values of nearby state beaches and parks, as well as notable local parks administered by other agencies.

Recreation

The diverse recreational opportunities available at Montana de Oro State Park will be interpreted along with appropriate regulations and safety tips.

Primary Theme:

Having Fun in the Surf

Opportunities for board and body surfing, wind surfing, and boating should be interpreted for visitors unfamiliar with the beach. Techniques, regulations, and points of access should be covered, along with wave formation and its relationship to surfing. A tide schedule should be kept posted.

Primary Theme:

Fishing for Sport

Interpretation will highlight edible fish commonly caught in the surf, including barred perch, jacksmelt, kelp greenling, silver perch, starry flounder, and walleye surfperch. It will also cover the best time of the year to catch them as well as fishing techniques and applicable regulations.

Primary Theme:

Dive into the Underwater World

Interpretation will illustrate appropriate skin and scuba diving equipment, techniques, regulations, safety, and favorable water conditions.

Primary Theme:

Courtesy and Common Sense

Montana de Oro offers a wide range of recreational opportunities, including horseback riding, hang gliding, hiking, and mountain biking. No one recreational activity "owns" the park, and many must share trails and facilities. Interpretation will remind visitors that safe, courteous use of the park is everyone's responsibility and will make their experience that much more enjoyable.

Management and Safety

Interpretation will inform visitors about how to use the parklands safely as well as indicate ways to preserve the environment. It should support the unit staff that enforces regulations, providing visitors the justification for regulations.

Primary Theme:
Be Safe at the Beach
Interpretation will aid visitors by explaining the formation and hazards of rip currents, sleeper waves, and backwash; methods swimmers can use to escape them; and other rescue techniques. It should also warn visitors about other dangers, such as stinging jellyfish, stingrays, sunburn, and buried fires and glass.



Each visitor is responsible for the park's future environmental quality.

Primary Theme:
Protecting the Park is Your Responsibility
The future environmental quality of the state park lies with each visitor. Interpretation will stress how erosion can be minimized and plants and animals preserved for generations, if visitors are mindful of the rules that protect the park. By staying on marked trails, visitors will also avoid hazards, such as unpleasant encounters with poison oak and ticks.

Secondary Theme:
Rebuilding the Natural Garden
Over time, the constant use of the bluffs and dunes by visitors for recreation has caused erosion, as well as blowouts of sand. From time to time, steps will be taken to correct that damage. Seeds and seedlings of dune vegetation will be planted in barren places, and foot traffic will be restricted. These measures, with public cooperation, will soon restore the dunes to

their natural beauty.

Secondary Theme:
Management by Fire
Periodically, the Department of Parks and Recreation uses prescribed fire as a tool to manage native plant communities. Once a natural occurring event, fire is now used in the parklands in confined areas to restore and maintain native vegetation. Interpretation will explain the reasons for prescribed burns and the benefits that are derived from them.

Proposed Interpretation

Facilities and Media

Indoor and outdoor exhibits and panels are useful interpretive tools for the park if used appropriately and in moderation. They have the advantages of always being available and requiring little or no staffing. Naturalists, docents, and exhibits are not always available to perform interpretive services, nor should they be. Interpretation is meant to facilitate the formation of a personal relationship with natural, historical, and recreational resources. Letting the scenery speak for itself is an important part of this.

Orientation is the first and probably the most important interpretive service we can offer. This is true from the visitor's perspective as well as from the point of view of protecting visitors and resources. Orientation panels should be situated at the entrance to Montana de Oro, at campgrounds, trailheads, and parking lots, and at the park headquarters in the Spooner ranch house.

There are currently few developed interpretive facilities at Montana de Oro State Park, and the lack of buildable land precludes construction of extensive interpretive structures in certain areas. Consequently, minimal interpretive facilities that include exhibit shelters, either free-standing or attached to permanent structures, are suggested for: the proposed contact station at the park entrance, turn-outs along Pecho Valley Road, Hazard Canyon Horse Camp, the proposed environmental education camp/center, the proposed Hazard Canyon Beach access parking area, the campfire center at Islay Creek Campground, Spooner Cove, the Bluff Trail parking area, Coon Creek trailhead, and at the trailheads of various hiking and equestrian trails. Existing shelters, such as the one at the Spooner ranch house, will continue to be maintained.

Most interpretive panels will be placed in attractive and substantial exhibit cases that will protect them from corrosion as well as vandalism. Whether free-standing or attached to permanent structures, the

cases should be installed in well-lit, heavily used areas, where they will be seen often and better protected from vandalism.

The size of the panels and cases should be standardized, so that seasonal exhibits or those that are worn out can be easily replaced. Modular cases and panels can be used throughout the San Luis Obispo Coast District, enabling the rotation of panels from unit to unit, especially panels with themes that have coastwide value. A formally developed program of seasonally rotated panels is strongly suggested. Outdoor panels should feature interpretive themes on the park's recreational, historic, and natural resources.

Visitors come to a visitor center to help them plan their park experience, to learn more of what they will see, perhaps to acquire additional interpretive material, and to use the restroom. Many people do not feel they have seen a park or even really arrived at the park until they have gone through a visitor center. Interpretation can facilitate the transition from the car to the park environment by pointing out what there is to see, presenting connecting information that will give more meaning to their experience, and provoking the visitor to go out and relate directly with the nearby resources.

It is proposed that the Spooner ranch house at Islay Creek be developed to serve as both a park office and a visitor center. The building is large enough to accommodate both functions and is conveniently located near heavily used Islay Creek Campground and Spooner Cove. Exhibits here should provide orientation to the park, its features and facilities, and interpretation of the cultural history of the area, including Native American, Hispanic, and American.

Interpretive development at the visitor center must follow an approved interpretive plan. Detailed information and guidelines contained in the document will help focus interpretive efforts, providing direction for the project as well as priorities. Exhibit design for the ranch house should be complementary to its historic architecture, helping to maintain its old-fashioned charm. A few period furnishings might be used in the building to restore some of the

original ambiance to the rooms. This should be done without interfering with needed interpretive exhibit space. Recommendations for furnishings would also be contained in the interpretive plan.

An interpretive sales counter should be maintained in the visitor center. The public should also be encouraged to make use of the nearby Morro Bay Museum of Natural History at Morro Bay State Park for a more comprehensive interpretation of the area's natural history.

The environmental education camp/center should facilitate pre- and post-field trip learning for visiting grammar, high school, and college classes and field seminar study groups. The center should include a good audio-visual room (which also could be used for other presentations), a research library, and study-collection storage. A campfire center should be developed close by for outdoor interpretive programs.

New audio-visual programs, based on the previously described themes, should be developed for the environmental education center as well as for use in school programs. Some taxidermic animal specimens and habitat groupings might be used here, but the temptation to reproduce the out-of-doors in the center should be resisted. The purpose of the environmental education camp/center should be to facilitate and provoke personal exploration of the beaches, wetlands, bluffs, canyons, and ridges of Montana de Oro. The emphasis would be on broad ecological and geological themes. The teacher's guide produced by the department in 1976 to facilitate visitation to the park by school groups should be revised.

Self-guiding nature trails, interpreted by a brochure, can be an appropriate, effective, and enjoyable interpretive tool. Publications, such as trail guides, monthly or seasonal visitor activity guides, bird and plant lists, orientation brochures, and books are highly valuable interpretive media, and their development for the park should be encouraged. Publications have souvenir value and they allow visitors, by way of text and bibliographies, to learn more about the park after they leave, or to prepare themselves for a return visit.

Visitor Activities

A walk led by knowledgeable and inspiring guides can provide the most valuable interpretive experience for a visitor. Talks, guided walks, and orientation services presented by park personnel, docents, and others are effective because they allow interactive communication and are responsive to the immediate needs of visitors. Outdoor presentations also have the resources immediately at hand for interpretation in its full environmental context.

Variety in interpretive themes, approaches, and trails is important for maintaining the interest of both repeat visitors and staff alike. Walks can be given in the dunes, at the beaches and wetlands, along the coastal bluffs, in the canyons, and along mountain trails. They could encompass a range of interesting and pertinent topics including tidepool life, chaparral and coastal scrub communities, gray whale watching, beach life, wildflowers, birds, and Native American plant uses.

Appropriate visitor activities for Montana de Oro State Park include formal and informal talks (on the unit's natural and historic resources and the State Park System); guided or self-guided walks; bird-watching; plant and animal study walks; demonstrations (lifeguard rescue, aquatic safety, board and body surfing, and surf fishing); and Junior Ranger Programs. Trained and certified docents could also aid the unit staff, augmenting the number and variety of interpretive programs offered to visitors on and off site.

It is highly desirable to extend interpretive efforts beyond the confines of the state park and into the local community. Outreach programs can serve people who cannot physically come to the unit, such as residents of convalescent homes. Schools and community-oriented clubs and organizations are excellent audiences for interpretive talks. Staff time should be allocated for promoting and presenting off-site talks.

In addition to outreach programs, a field seminar program consistent with department objectives for the park is proposed. It could offer in-depth inter-

pretation without substantially increasing the staff workload or the unit budget. This kind of program engages the creative and educational talents of the local community in a wide spectrum of interpretive approaches to the park's resources. Briefly, a cooperating, nonprofit association would recruit qualified teaching staff for a season's program offerings. They could be graduate students, teachers, professors, artists, writers, photographers, or anyone with special knowledge or skills related to the park's resources.

Day-long and even weekend-long courses could be offered on many popular and challenging subjects such as nature photography, bird identification, surf fishing, nature sketching, wildflower study, and marine mammal watching. The association would print and distribute a course-offering mailer, secure course accreditation through local colleges if desired, handle enrollment and fee collection, monitor the success of the courses, and pay an agreed-upon percentage to the instructors.

In addition to supplying a new kind of quality interpretive experience at little or no cost to the department, such a program could raise funds for other interpretive efforts and greatly enhance the local public's use and appreciation of Montana de Oro State Park. Office space and a meeting place would be needed and could possibly be set aside in the environmental education camp/center.

Interpretive Associations

The Natural History Association of San Luis Obispo Coast, Inc., is the department's official cooperating association for California state parks along the San Luis Obispo Coast. Since its founding in 1977, the Natural History Association, with its 800 members, has demonstrated tremendous initiative and a willingness to support a diversity of programs in the park. Headquartered at the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History in Morro Bay State Park, the association's members provide most of the interpretive programs for Montana de Oro State Park, including off-site programs in schools. They conduct the training of new docents, produce interpretive brochures and monthly newsletters, give nature walks and interpretive talks, plan special events, produce revenue for planned development and programs, prepare exhibits, and maintain collections, to name a few of their activities. Over 150 members are active docents.

Montana de Oro State Park also has other community support from organizations who occasionally present interpretive programs. Among others, they include the Morro Coast Audubon Society, Inc. and the Sierra Club.

Interpretive Collections

Montana de Oro State Park's interpretive collections should be maintained principally for display and educational purposes, rather than for scientific research. All collections should be professionally documented and maintained.

The park needs to have a collections facility, where objects can be properly cleaned, repaired, and preserved in a safe environment. Appropriate environmental controls, lighting, fire protection, and security are essential for creating this safe environment. A study identifying interpretive collections needs with recommendations for Montana de Oro State Park will be developed to ensure the creation of a safe environment.

Photographic collections will probably be the most useful collection to the park interpreter. A thorough photographic survey the natural and cultural resources of Montana de Oro should be an ongoing interpretive project. Early photographs of the historic and natural resources of the unit should be gathered, organized, documented, and preserved. Good protective and easily retrievable slide and print storage systems should be provided for the originals.

Interpretive Concessions

Appropriate concession activities for Montana de Oro State Park could include concessions that are interpretive in nature. In addition, a sales counter featuring books, publications, and other interpretive items at the Spooner ranch house visitor center would be appropriate.



Guided walks and hikes are among the many interpretive activities park personnel and docents offer to park visitors.

Recommendations

The following ongoing interpretive activities should continue to be encouraged:

- Guided walks, demonstrations, interpretive presentations, and Junior Ranger Programs when projected visitor participation warrant these efforts.
- Development and updating of monthly or seasonal visitor activity guides; bird, animal, and plant lists; orientation brochures, books, and bibliographies highlighting the state park's resources.
- Preparation of a revised teacher's guide, with lesson plans, to encourage and facilitate visitation by school groups.
- An active outreach program.

Development priority should be given to the interpretive activities listed below:

- Fabrication and installation and/or maintenance of orientation/interpretive shelters at the park entrance, turn-outs along Pecho Valley Road, Hazard Canyon Horse Camp, the environmental education camp/center, the new Hazard Canyon Beach access area, Bluff Trail parking, the campfire center at Islay Creek Campground, Spooner Cove, Coon Creek trailhead, and at the trailheads of various hiking and equestrian trails.
- A series of standard size interpretive panels based on the themes described and a seasonal rotation program for them.
- An interpretive plan for the Spooner ranch house visitor center.
- A study with recommendations on the unit's interpretive collections needs.
- Interpretive exhibits at the Spooner ranch house visitor center and collections storage facilities as recommended in the interpretive collections needs study.
- A reference library, audio-visual room, and study-collection storage at the environmental education camp/center for use by staff, docents, and visitors.
- New self-guiding trails with accompanying brochures focusing on the previously described interpretive themes.
- Audio-visual programs based on the previously described interpretive themes for use in and outside the park.
- A new brochure for the state park.
- A field seminar program to encourage the in-depth study of Montana de Oro's resources.

Concessions Element

The Concessions Element of the general plan consists of an evaluation of existing and potential concession activities, an inventory of additional visitor services, and a statement of appropriate concession policies and guidelines consistent with the unit's classification.

A Concessions Element is a required aspect of general planning for all park units. The Public Resources Code, Section 5080.02 et seq., describes the manner in which concessions can be operated in the State Park System.

Definition

A concession is defined as authority to permit uses of State Park System lands and/or facilities for a specified period of time. The intent is to provide the public with goods, services, or facilities that the department cannot provide as conveniently or efficiently, or to permit limited uses of State Park System lands for other purposes, compatible with the public interest and consistent with the Public Resources Code.

Purpose

It is the department's policy to enter into concession contracts for the provision of services, products, facilities, programs, and management and/or visitor services that will enhance visitor recreational and educational experiences as well as safety and convenience. Such concessions should not create added financial burden on the state and, wherever possible, shall reduce costs and/or generate revenues to aid in maintaining and expanding the State Park System. In carrying out this policy, the department must adhere to the provisions of the Public Resources Code that forbid commercial exploitation of resources and that limit the kinds of improvements and activities that are allowed in certain types of units.

General Concession Policies

The following are general statements of concession policies for the State Park System:

Policy: *Concession developments must be consistent with the unit's purpose and classification, in conformance with the unit's general plan and the Public Resources Code.*

Policy: *Concessions shall provide needed and appropriate visitor services at a fair and reasonable price to users, competitive with similar businesses outside park units, and shall ensure the State Park System of an adequate return.*

Policy: *Concessions shall avoid duplicating visitor facilities or services that are adequately provided a short distance outside the unit.*

Policy: *The department encourages nonprofit corporations and small, ethnic, and racial minority-owned/operated businesses as concessionaires.*

Policy: *Concession proposals shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as submitted to the department to determine whether such services are appropriate and will expand visitor enjoyment.*

Existing and Recommended Concessions

Currently, Kern County operates at Montana de Oro State Park an environmental education camp, called "Camp KEEP" (Kern Environmental Education Program), for Kern County school children. The camp is located in temporary, portable facilities. The general plan recommends — establishing a permanent environmental education center, geared to educating children year round, including a summer camp. It is recommended that the program and facilities be opened to a wider audience through the public bidding process in accordance with Public Resources Code sections 5080.03 et seq.

The plan does not recommend any other concessions because, at present, there is no recognized need. Many retail services needed by park visitors, such as groceries or camping supplies, are available in the local communities close to the park. Interpretation can be aided by nonprofit interpretive associations.



Specific commercial retail proposals shall be studied on a case-by-case basis as submitted to the department. At this time it is not possible to predict all potential concession activities. The economic feasibility of proposed concessions shall be determined by the Office of Economic and Fiscal Affairs, with participation and review by Resource Protection, Interpretive Services, Development, Operations, Acquisition, and Statewide Planning. Final approval for development and operation of a proposed concession rests with the director of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The Kern County Office of Education operates an environmental education camp program at Montana de Oro for Kern County school children.

Operations Element

The Operations Element defines how the operations staff will carry out its responsibilities to operate and care for the park, protect the resources, serve park visitors, provide interpretive opportunity, enforce the law, ensure proper park use, and maintain facilities.

The Operations Element outlines broad operational goals for the unit. It assesses the impact of the plan's proposed resource management policies and land use and facilities proposals on the unit's existing operations. It identifies existing and potential operations problems and strategies for solution.

Operations Organization

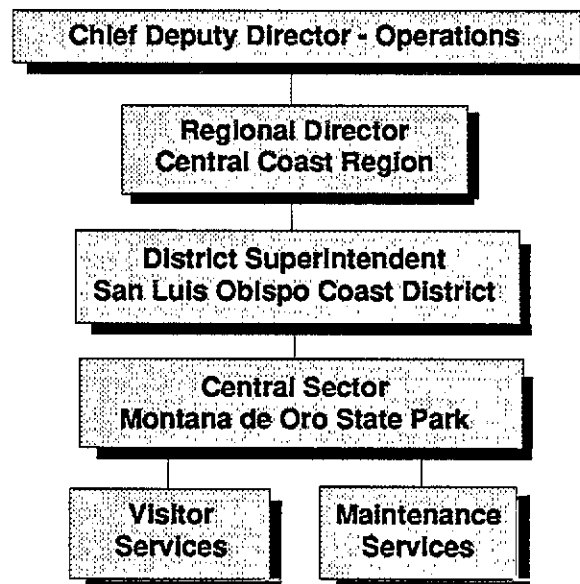
The operational responsibilities are carried out by unit personnel, who are organized within the Central Sector of the San Luis Obispo Coast District. The district superintendent supervises the three sectors and reports to the regional director of the Central Coast Region in Monterey. At the unit level, operating functions are divided into visitor and maintenance services, while administrative services are provided at the district level.

Existing Operations

This unit has been operated as a state park since its establishment in 1964. The park receives nearly 450,000 visitors annually, a substantial portion of them from the local community. Permanent and seasonal staff operate the park.

Docents assist in park operations by disseminating park information at the park office/visitor center on weekends and during peak visitor-use periods. Docents also offer a wide variety of interpretive activities to park visitors year round, augmenting those provided by park staff.

Park Operations Organization Structure



Special Considerations

Public Protection

Because of population growth in the area, the park's proximity to Highways 1 and 101, ease of travel from the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas, and limited park staff, law enforcement in the park is a constant challenge. The proximity of residential communities bordering the park requires that park law enforcement staff monitor park boundaries for trespass, off-highway vehicle use, fire hazards, and other illegal activities. The lack of a controlled access contributes to crimes relating to alcohol, drugs, and theft; more serious crimes are also a constant concern.

Maintenance and Housekeeping

Care and upkeep of this unit is provided by maintenance staff whose reporting work location is Morro Bay State Park. The primary workload revolves around campground and day-use area maintenance, extensive trail maintenance, maintenance of park roads, maintenance of boundary fences along critical dune and kangaroo rat habitat, an extensive sign program, and facility maintenance of the historic Spooner ranch house/park office. Distance from the primary work reporting location and limited staff resources restrict the delivery of these services.

Community Interest

Montana de Oro State Park is heavily used by the local community for a wide variety of recreational activities ranging from hang-gliding and scuba diving to nature study and hiking. The local community takes a very strong interest in activities and facilities in the park and any change in park operations or administrative policy that affects public use. Park management must endeavor to maintain open lines of information and communication with local governmental staffs and elected officials, as well as citizen groups representing the varied interests of the community.

Public Safety

The safety of visitors to Montana de Oro State Park is a prime concern. Because of the predominantly natural condition of the park and its many resources, hazards exist and accidents do occur. Much of the park is reachable only by foot or horseback, with limited four-wheel-drive access to the coastline and sandspit area. Responses to such varied emergencies as boating and swimming accidents, cliff rescues, wildland fires, and traffic accidents require trained staff. The park staff regularly practices and formally develops their skills for such emergencies. Emergency response procedures have been developed and are periodically tested by park staff and allied agencies. The Department of Parks and Recreation will continue to monitor aquatic recreation activity in order to provide adequate safety services.

Utility Emergencies

There is an ever-present danger of a radiological release from the nearby Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. Montana de Oro State Park's southern boundary joins with Pacific Gas and Electric's Field Ranch property. Pecho Valley Road, a designated evacuation route from the nuclear power facility, bisects the length of the state park. In case of emergency, park staff would have to implement emergency procedures that are identified in a comprehensive evacuation plan. The plan requires coordination of park units and allied agencies within the central coast geographical area.

Off-Highway Vehicles

Off-highway vehicle activity in the park has been an ongoing problem, particularly along the northern boundary, in Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat area and on sandspit dunes. Access is through adjacent residential developments. Signing and persistent enforcement of laws governing off-road vehicle operation have helped control the problem, but increased boundary signing, fencing of critical habitat, and additional park staff are needed to cope with the problem. The park staff is continuing its efforts to control resource damage to Shark's Inlet, Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat, and dune complex areas caused by illegal off-road and four-wheel-drive vehicular activity.

Easements and Rights-of-Way

Pacific Gas and Electric Company retains easement rights for a portion of Pecho Valley Road for access to its property and for evacuation from the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. The telephone companies maintain an easement for the trans-Pacific telephone cable diagonally across the park via Hazard Canyon, as well as local line easements parallel to Pecho Valley Road. These access needs have to be carefully coordinated and controlled to prevent destruction of resource values and possible disruption of visitor activities.

Jurisdictions

The operation of Montana de Oro State Park depends on the maintenance of close working relationships between the department and agencies with concurrent or overlapping jurisdictions. The district superintendent coordinates with federal, state, and county, and city governments and elected officials to maintain open lines of communication to ensure that problems and conflicts can be anticipated and avoided.

Trail Program

Montana de Oro State Park contains a heavily used and complex trail system. Because of heavy local involvement by hikers, horse-back riders, and mountain bike enthusiasts, the trail system is subjected to year-round intensive use. Some conflicts have occurred between user groups. Additionally, many of the trails were formerly ranch roads or of a design inconsistent with recognized trail standards, resulting in substantial maintenance costs and resource damage. Maintenance of trails is currently achieved primarily by inmate contract labor and volunteers.

Volunteer Management

The size and complexity of the unit limit the ability of the park staff to meet the public's demand for services. An active volunteer management program has been developed through the growth of the Morro Bay Natural History Association. The volunteers provide weekend coverage at the Spooner ranch house visitor center, park office, and a wide variety of interpretive and maintenance activities in the park year round.

Horse Patrol Program

The horse patrol program at Montana de Oro State Park is currently approached in several ways. State-owned horses are assigned to rangers for use in patrolling trails and heavy-use areas. The Coast Mounted Assistance Unit, an organized volunteer equestrian group, provides visitor information, trail assistance, and support to the park through their activities.

Prescribed Burn Program

Operations staff is currently involved in periodic prescribed burns in an effort to restore fire to its natural role in the environment. Significant staff time is devoted to planning and conducting these burns. Fire is an important element in improving Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat, maintaining the natural plant species, and enhancing the rare and endangered plant species, while limiting the advance of invasive exotic plants.

Resource Management Projects

Because of the large amount of acreage, the diverse and critical nature of much of the habitat, and pressure from year-round public visitation, resource management in the unit is a primary concern. Degradation of cultural and natural resources is an ongoing problem in spite of ranger patrols. Resource projects such as eucalyptus removal and containment, revegetation of the sandspit dune area, the fencing and periodic controlled burning of Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat, and ongoing trail rehabilitation and maintenance require a major commitment of funds and staff. Much of this work remains to be done with additional staff and new funding sources.

Operational Goals and Implementation

Montana de Oro State Park was established to preserve for the people of California a part of their once pristine and abundant California coastline and landscape, and to provide for the public use, enjoyment, and understanding of the park.

The preceding list of special considerations includes problems and issues undergoing current resolution. Some problems are outside the existing budgeted scope and ability of the department to resolve. As the general plan is implemented and new facilities are developed, additional public visitation and new demands on limited resources will result.

Facility Development

Development and maintenance of additional park facilities presents a significant increase in operations responsibility. Significant expansion will include operation and maintenance of a contact station on Pecho Valley Road, upgrading of the current campground and construction of a second campground (50-75 units) at Hazard Canyon, improvement of day-use facilities at Hazard Canyon Horse Camp, Coon Creek, and Spooner Cove, new beach access and day-use parking for the sandspit, new beach parking at Hazard Canyon, and the development of the Spooner ranch house into an operational visitor center.

The effects of the above developments will be to increase the year-round visitation to the point where services cannot be provided to the public with the existing staff and operating funds. Additionally, state responsibility for maintenance of Pecho Valley Road and construction of a new roadway to beach access parking near Army Road will require a maintenance capability not currently available with existing district maintenance budgets and staff.

Resource Management

Natural resource protection, management, and restoration are, and will continue to be, a major function of park staff at Montana de Oro State Park. The Resource Element identifies a number of major resource management projects and programs that are needed to meet the operations responsibilities for management, as set forth in the Public Resources Code. Some of the most important programs are dune stabilization and revegetation, Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat protection and restoration, and restoration of native vegetation, endangered species habitat, and natural fire cycles through prescribed burning, trespass control, erosion control, and eucalyptus containment and removal. The protection of cultural and archeological sites is also of great importance. Staff coordination and support will be a prerequisite to the successful administration of these programs. Protecting these resources and educating the public and staff to the sensitive and nonrenewable nature of cultural resources will be a continuing challenge to management.

Public Environmental Education Center

The Kern County Environmental Education Center (Camp KEEP) currently provides a year-round educational experience for thousands of children primarily from the Central Valley. This plan calls for the further development of the education center into a facility open to other educational and public institutions as well. This upgrade of facilities will result in additional facility maintenance and staff overview, causing an additional workload for park and district administrative staff. The department also expects that construction, operating costs, and ongoing maintenance of the facility will be covered in an operating agreement with an outside agency.

Trails Management

The trails program at Montana de Oro State Park has been discussed in the **Special Considerations** section of this Operations Element. It should be noted that most trails in the unit predate establishment of the park and were originally designed for purposes other than recreation and without regard for subsequent erosion and resource damage. A major portion of this Operations Element identifies the need to realign and reconstruct designated trails. Existing trail maintenance already places a heavy burden on district resources, and the allocation of additional funding will be required to maintain new trails. Expanded interagency agreements with forestry and correctional crews and initiation of an expanded volunteer trails program will be pursued. Mountain bikes will be limited to service roads in an attempt to control erosion problems and conflicts with other trail users until a comprehensive trail management plan is prepared.

Volunteerism

- **Natural History and Docent Associations**

Under the auspices of the Morro Bay Natural History Association, a docent interpretive organization is active in providing a wide variety of interpretive services. Development of the day-use areas, improvement of trails, development of the campgrounds, and more formalized utilization of the Spooner ranch house as a visitor center will substantially increase the need for personal services. We anticipate that the volunteer community will grow in response to new service opportunities.

- **Mounted Assistance Unit**

The park has an active volunteer equestrian unit known as the Coast Mounted Assistance Unit. Radio equipment, separate from that available for law enforcement use, must be obtained to provide for a safe and effective mounted assistance program. New park facilities will increase the need for adequate communications.

- **Camp Host Program**

The department's Camp Host program has been effective in reducing campground theft, vandalism, and related illegal and/or undesirable activities, thereby releasing both maintenance and ranger personnel for more critical park problems. The use of additional Camp Host positions is anticipated with the development of the Hazard Canyon campground.

- **Trail Maintenance Volunteers**

Park and district staff continue to obtain the necessary tools and materials sufficient to maintain and repair identified trail projects. Labor will be provided by volunteer groups such as the Sierra Club, school groups, and equestrian and mountain bike organizations, as well as inmates, with park staff providing supervision and expertise. Expansion of this program is anticipated given the increasing demand for limited trail space by diverse and occasionally conflicting user groups and the limited ability of the department to provide this service. Augmentation of this program with additional staff and funding will therefore be required.

Unresolved Issues

Despite efforts to resolve all issues that currently or potentially affect the future of Montana de Oro State Park, some issues remain unresolved. The general plan makes several recommendations regarding the addition of certain lands to the park. However, the future disposition of these lands is unknown and may negatively impact the park, its values, and/or implementation of the general plan's proposals. For example, PG&E's plans for the Field Ranch south of the park are unknown. Private sale or development of this property may mean increased non-park-related traffic on Pecho Valley Road through Montana de Oro, as well as a number of other adverse affects. However, it is not possible at this time to determine appropriate park protection measures.

Field Ranch

Recent legislation required the department to prepare a report on the feasibility of acquiring the Field Ranch, or portions of it, for Montana de Oro State Park. Since the report was initiated, the property was sold to Pacific Gas and Electric as an addition to its Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. PG&E is now evaluating the property to determine which lands it needs for safety and security purposes.

The department currently has no funds available for acquisition of any Field Ranch lands. However, it may be possible for the department to temporarily operate a portion of the ranch for the mutual benefit of the owner and the public. The department is attempting to pursue this possibility with PG&E; however, pending the results of its evaluation, PG&E has made no commitments to the department.

The feasibility report prepared by the department recommends priorities for fee acquisition of portions of the Field Ranch which the general plan supports. These are listed in order (higher to lower) below, along with the general plan's recommendations for land use classifications should these lands be acquired. Any lands acquired will require preparation of a detailed resource inventory that may alter these proposed land use classifications and will help to determine subsequent resource management.

- 1. A 1,270-acre portion of the Coon Creek watershed.**
These lands should be added to the Coon Creek/Islay Creek primitive/roadless zone identified in the Land Use Element of the general plan.
- 2. Point Buchon marine terrace and its viewshed (1,475 acres).**
These lands should be designated an open space/scenic zone, providing public access to the beach at the mouth of Coon Creek. This addition would also make it feasible to obtain a long-term lease of the Point Buchon Reef area (part of the Hazard Reef formation) as part of a highly desirable underwater park. Ownership of the adjacent terrestrial shoreline is a prerequisite to obtaining a long-term lease from the State Lands Commission.
- 3. Loop trail corridor right-of-way/easement across other portions of the ranch.**
- 4. Trall right-of-way easement from Montana de Oro to Port San Luis across PG&E lands.**
This would allow completion of an important segment of the proposed California Coastal Trail.
- 5. All other Field Ranch lands outside the power plant's safety/security zone.**
These lands should be managed for nonintensive recreation use. More specific land use designations and resource management policies would require a detailed resource inventory of these lands.

Pecho Valley Road

For most of its distance through the park, Pecho Valley Road is county owned. Implementation of one of the general plan's recommendations — development of a park entrance and contact station to provide control of access in and out of the park for resource and visitor protection — depends on acquisition of the road right-of-way. Without it, visitor and vehicle control and revenue collection would be inefficient. Alternative solutions include development of a controlled access and contact station at each of the park's major use areas, requiring that one person be used to staff each contact station.



Pecho Valley Road

Environmental Impact Element

The Environmental Impact Element serves as the environmental impact report required by the California Environmental Quality Act and the state EIR guidelines.

The Environmental Impact Element incorporates by reference the other elements of the general plan, as the Project Description and the Description of the Existing Environment. It should be recognized that the level of detail of the Environmental Impact Element is commensurate with that of the general plan. As site-specific development and resource management plans are proposed, they will be subject to further environmental review, and the appropriate environmental documents will be prepared, if necessary.

This Environmental Impact Element covers the proposals for resource management and protection, land use, and facility development.

Following preparation of the Preliminary General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report, the document was circulated for public review. The department responded to public comments and recommended changes to the Preliminary General Plan. The Preliminary General Plan together with the Response to Comments constituted the Final Environmental Impact Report presented to, certified, and approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission in June 1988. The public comments and department's response to these comments are included in Appendix D. The changes recommended by the department and approved by the Commission have been incorporated into the text of this document, the final general plan.

Project Description

See the Resource, Land Use, Facilities, and Interpretive Elements.

Description of Existing Environment

See the Resource, Land Use, and Facilities Elements.

Significant Environmental Effects

- The expansion of trails at Montana de Oro State Park could accelerate soil erosion and result in vegetation loss through removal in construction and incidental destruction by the public. Sixteen rare or endangered plant species have been identified at Montana de Oro State Park.
- Trail and facility construction could impact archeological and significant fragile fossil resources.
- Increased public use of the Morro Bay sandspit could lead to dune destabilization. Inland transportation of sand would increase. The rate of sediment deposition in Morro Bay would increase. The extent of the contribution of inland sand transport from the Morro Bay sandspit to the sedimentation of Morro Bay is unknown.
- Montana de Oro State Park contains some of the historical habitat range of the state and federally listed endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat. The proposed beach access will replace the current access within the prime range; however, the proposed access, although on the edge of the prime habitat area, is still within the historic range.
- The removal of exotic plant species may have an adverse visual impact and may expose soils to accelerated erosion until native vegetation is reestablished.
- Increased public use could lead to increased fire hazard, particularly in the backcountry part of Montana de Oro State Park.
- Increased public use could adversely affect the habitat of rare or endangered animal species. In addition to the Morro Bay kangaroo rat, the California least tern and the Morro shoulderband snail have been identified within Montana de Oro State Park. The least tern is facing extinction and is sensitive to disturbance of its nesting colonies.
- Increased public use will require additional water supplies. Assuming full development and full occupation, the water requirement will increase by approximately 5,000 to 7,000 gallons per day.

Unavoidable Environmental Effects

Removal of vegetation, construction and maintenance of roads and trails, and creation of impervious surface areas will accelerate soil erosion in those disturbed areas.

Mitigation Measures

- All excavation proposals will be reviewed by department historians and/or archeologists. Excavations or ground disturbances in known culturally sensitive areas will be monitored. If any cultural resources are accidentally uncovered during development, all work will cease until the site has been checked by an archeologist or historian and appropriate mitigation is developed.
- New or replacement utility lines, where they could be visual intrusions, will be installed underground next to roads, where possible.
- Facilities will be sited to reduce vegetation loss.
- The department will maintain a prescribed burn program to reduce excessive fuel accumulations and to restore fire to its natural role in the ecosystem at Montana de Oro State Park. During periods of extreme fire hazard, certain uses or activities, such as campfires, may be curtailed or restricted in the unit.
- Trail alignments will be selected and developed with the cooperation of resource specialists, unit staff, and user groups to reduce soil erosion, vegetation loss, and degradation of cultural values.
- A fire management plan will be developed for Montana de Oro State Park to reduce resource impacts from fire suppression activities, such as the grading to create firebreaks or emergency access for fire-fighting vehicles.
- A beach access trail will be developed at Montana de Oro State Park to reduce dune erosion or instability. The creation of a designated trail, along with appropriate pedestrian traffic channeling structures, can reduce the development of "volunteer" trails. The beach access trail alignment will be selected taking wind direction and vegetation patterns into consideration.
- Destabilized dune areas will be revegetated with species indigenous to the unit.
- In an effort to maintain and promote native plant species and habitats, exotic plant species will be eradicated. Those areas where exotic plant species have been eradicated will be revegetated with species indigenous to the unit or area. Eucalyptus trees identified as overwintering roost for the monarch butterfly will be retained until native vegetation is of sufficient size to support the overwintering monarch butterflies.
- The department will survey the unit for California least tern nesting sites. If any nests are found, steps will be taken to protect the nests, including posting and restriction of public use around the nesting areas.
- The beach access area for the Morro sandspit will be relocated to reduce the human disturbance of the Morro Bay kangaroo rat habitat.
- Low-flow water heads and toilets will be used to reduce the water requirements.

Alternatives

Several alternative facility development configurations and levels of development were considered and presented to the public during the evolution of the proposed plan. The alternatives considered, but not selected as the proposed plan, are discussed here along with the no-project alternative. The alternatives of less or more intensive development are not ruled out with the adoption of the general plan. The general plan is only a guideline for development. Additional or more intensive development may be possible to a minor degree, within the environmental constraints and general plan guidelines, to meet increased or changing recreational demands. Conversely, in preparation of site development plans, previously unknown environmental constraints may require less-intensive development. The facility development proposals indicate what is estimated to be an acceptable range.

• No-Project Alternative

The no-project alternative would leave the development and resource management of the unit in its current state. Uncontrolled and poorly located access to the Morro Bay sandspit would continue, with adverse impacts to the dune vegetation and wildlife habitat. Recreational opportunities would be curtailed by the lack of adequate facilities for parking and access. Plant communities dependent on periodic fires may be lost. Exotic plant species may continue to displace native plants.

• Alternative Sites

Facilities could be placed at different sites. Resource constraints limit the area available for development; therefore, relocating a facility or use to a different site would displace the proposed use or facility. For example, a campground could be developed at the Coon Creek area, but this would probably preclude any significant day-use development. Resource impacts may be approximately the same; however, existing use patterns would be disrupted.

Relationship Between Short-Term Uses and Maintenance or Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

The proposed long-term and short-term use is preservation and recreation. The resources will be protected, and should another use prove more beneficial and critical to the public than preservation, the resources will be available. There is no intent to enhance potential productivity; the natural resource value may be improved through resource management programs such as native plant revegetation or dune stabilization.

Irreversible Environmental Changes

No new land areas or natural resources will be irreversibly committed with implementation of the plan. Development proposals generally involve areas of previous impact or suitability for development, and the nature of the development is such that it could be removed and the sites returned to a near predevelopment condition. Only the building materials and the energy consumed in construction, operation, and maintenance may be considered an irreversible commitment of resources.

Growth-Inducing Impacts

There will be a minor growth-inducing impact due to increased recreational capacity and staffing. Changing recreational use patterns and population growth will more likely have a greater effect on the level of recreational use. Increased recreational capacity may influence demand for support facilities such as service stations, grocery stores, restaurants, and sports equipment outlets. However, the impact is not expected to be significant given the level of the proposed facility development; most of the facility development is proposed to enhance or better accommodate existing use. The potential increased use relative to the existing regional supply of visitor support facilities is relatively small. The demands created by staff increases would be typical of residential needs (schools, hospitals, etc.), and would be minor.

Effects Found Not Significant

- Noise levels should not significantly increase. Traffic will generally be confined to Pecho Valley Road.
- Traffic volumes should not significantly increase.
- The proposed development will create new impervious surface areas which will alter the rate and timing of runoff. However, in comparison to the total watershed area, the increase will be insignificant.
- Sewage and waste production and fuel consumption will rise proportionally with the increase in public use.

Selected References

- California Department of Finance, Population Research Unit. Projected Total Population of California Counties July 1, 1985 to July 1, 2020, Report 86 P-1. December 1986.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation. California Recreation Demand: 1980-2000. April 11, 1986.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation. California State Park System Plan 1980. September 1979.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation. "Resource Inventory, Montana de Oro State Park." Sacramento: Department of Parks and Recreation, Natural Heritage and Cultural Heritage Sections, Resource Protection Division. September 1986.
- California Polytechnic State University. Resource Inventory, Marine Life: Cayucos State Beach, Morro Strand State Beach, Atascadero State Beach, Morro Bay State Park, Montana de Oro State Park. San Luis Obispo: California Polytechnic State University, Biological Sciences Department. December 1986.
- Gates, Dorothy L. and Jane H. Bailey. Morro Bay's Yesterdays: Vignettes of Our City's Lives and Times. Morro Bay: El Morro Publications. 1982.
- Gerdes, Gene L., Edward R. J. Primbs, and Bruce M. Browning. "The Natural Resources of Morro Bay: Their Status and Future," Coastal Wetland Series #8. State of California, Department of Fish and Game. August 1974.
- Grant, Campbell. "Chumash: Introduction," Handbook of North American Indians: California, Vol. 8. Robert Heizer, vol. ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institution. 1978.
- Greenwood, Roberta S. "Obispeno and Purisimeno Chumash," Handbook of North American Indians: California, Vol. 8. Robert Heizer, vol. ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Kroeber, A. L. Handbook of the Indians of California. Berkeley: California Book Company Ltd. 1953.
- Morro Coast Audubon Society, Inc. The Birds of San Luis Obispo County, California. 1985.

Selected References

- Robinson, W. W. The Story of San Luis Obispo County. San Luis Obispo: Insurance and Trust Co. 1957.
- Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Education Center. California's Chumash Indians. Santa Barbara: John Dantel, publisher. 1986.
- Sudia, Dr. Theodore W. "Recreational Carrying Capacity of the National Parks," Guideline, Vol. 3, No. 3. May/June 1973.
- Swanson, Richard L. Morro Bay, Los Osos Oaks, and Montana de Oro Teacher's Guide: Part 1: Before and After the Field Trip. Department of Parks and Recreation. October 1976.
- Tays, George. "Morro Bay State Park, State Park No. 52," History of California State Parks. Vernon Aubrey Neasham, ed. Works Progress Administration Official Project #465-03-3-133. Ms. Berkeley: State of California, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks. 1937.
- Wieman, Harold. Morro Bay Meanderings. Second ed. San Luis Obispo: Padre Productions. 1984.
- Wieman, Harold. Nature Walks on the San Luis Coast. San Luis Obispo: Padre Productions. 1980.

Appendix A: User Survey and Newsletters

Appendix A consists of the user survey distributed at the Morro Bay Area State Park System Units between Memorial Day and Labor Day 1986 and four newsletters prepared as part of the general plan process to inform the public and solicit comments.

Appendix A

State of California - The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION



SAN LUIS OBISPO COAST DISTRICT

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is developing long-range plans for the management of the units of the State Parks System in the Morro Bay area. As part of this process we would like to know more about the people who use these parks and what needs to be done to improve the quality of your recreation experiences. Please complete this questionnaire and either return it to a park employee or mail it back to us. THANK YOU!

ABOUT YOU AND YOUR TRAVEL?

- Which park unit are you visiting today? (If you are visiting more than one park, please use additional questionnaires. Please use only one questionnaire per park unit).
 - Montana de Oro State Park
 - Atascadero State Beach
 - Morro Bay State Park
 - Morro Strand State Beach
 - Los Osos Oaks State Reserve
 - Cayucos State Beach
- How often do you visit this park?
 - This is first visit
 - 3-4 times a week or more
 - 1-3 times a week
 - 2-3 times a month
 - Once a month
 - 1-6 times a year
- How long does your visit usually last?
 - Less than an hour
 - A few days
 - Less than a day
 - One week or more
 - Overnight
- In what city and state do you live?

- Your age? _____
- What is your primary destination on this trip?
 - This area is it
 - San Simeon/Big Sur/Monterey
 - Santa Cruz/San Francisco and further north
 - Central Valley and further east
 - Los Angeles and further south
- Where did you stay overnight? How many nights? _____
 - Montana de Oro State Park
 - Morro Bay State Park
 - Atascadero State Beach
 - Town of Morro Bay
 - Los Osos/San Luis Obispo/Baywood Park
 - San Simeon/Cambria
 - Other _____
- What type of accommodations did you use?
 - Motel
 - Tent
 - RV
 - Bed & Breakfast
 - Friend's Home
 - _____
- How many people are in your party? _____
- How did you arrive at the park?
 - Car
 - Bike
 - On foot
 - Bus
 - RV

WHY DO YOU COME TO THIS PARK?

- Indicate only those activities below that interest you and which you would want to have emphasized within the park (use a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being of the most interest to you).

<input type="checkbox"/> Walking	<input type="checkbox"/> Golfing
<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming
<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunbathing
<input type="checkbox"/> Jogging	<input type="checkbox"/> Beachcombing
<input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding	<input type="checkbox"/> Surfing
<input type="checkbox"/> Mountain biking	<input type="checkbox"/> Sailing
<input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking	<input type="checkbox"/> Boating
<input type="checkbox"/> Camping	<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing
<input type="checkbox"/> Photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Visiting Museum
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Docent Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Birdwatching	<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____
- What do you think is special about this park? (Use a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the best, etc.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends
<input type="checkbox"/> Scenery	<input type="checkbox"/> Beach
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation
<input type="checkbox"/> It's nearby	<input type="checkbox"/> Weather
<input type="checkbox"/> Ocean	<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreational Opportunities	_____
- What unique or fragile resources known to you at this park require special care or protection?

VISITOR SERVICES & FACILITIES?

- Do you think additional or increased visitor services/facilities are needed? YES NO
If yes, rate the items below using a scale of 0 to 5 (0 being no increase/addition, 5 being the greatest need for an increase/addition).

<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking Trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Interpretive Center
<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle Trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmnt. Educ. Cntr.
<input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Bike Trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior Ranger Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Jogging Trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Tent Campground
<input type="checkbox"/> Horse Trail	<input type="checkbox"/> RV Campground
<input type="checkbox"/> Interpretive Trail	<input type="checkbox"/> Hike-In Campground
<input type="checkbox"/> Bike Rental Facility	<input type="checkbox"/> Hike-In Camp
<input type="checkbox"/> Horse Rental Facility	<input type="checkbox"/> Group Campground
<input type="checkbox"/> Horse Staging Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Campfire Center
<input type="checkbox"/> Shuttle Bus System	<input type="checkbox"/> Sanitation Station
<input type="checkbox"/> Comfort Station	<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Store
<input type="checkbox"/> Snack Bar	<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Picnic Sites	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Picnic Area area	_____

15. When you visit this park, do you want to be provided more information on:
- Cultural features (Native American history, Mexican California, ranching, etc.)
 - Natural features (dunes, morros, vegetation, wildlife, etc.)
 - Recreational opportunities (other parks in area, activities, etc.)
 - No additional interpretation/information needed

WHAT KIND OF A PARK SHOULD THIS BE?

16. What is your general philosophy about the use of land at this park?
- Minimum development, preserve the resources
 - Leave the park the way it is
 - Provide more recreation opportunities
 - Maximum development while preserving the resources

17. What detracts from your visit to this park?
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough visitor facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park land area too small | <input type="checkbox"/> Weather |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough recreation opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Litter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Many areas inaccessible | <input type="checkbox"/> Too crowded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercialism | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard to get to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overdeveloped | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

18. What is the single most important change or improvement, if any, you would like to see at this park?

19. What kind of place do you think this park should be?

20. Please use this space for any additional comments you would like to make.

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

If you would like to be on our mailing list for future planning activities or for results of this survey, please provide your name and mailing address.

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

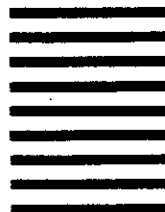
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 4990 SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
 P.O. BOX 2390
 SACRAMENTO, CA 95811

ATTENTION: JILL VANNEMAN

NO POSTAGE
 NECESSARY
 IF MAILED
 IN THE
 UNITED STATES



Update

The General Plan Newsletter

Issue One November 1986



Morro Bay Area State Park Units

The First Public Meeting

Please join us in planning the future of the Morro Bay Area state park units. Our first public meeting will be held:

November 12, 1986, 7p.m.

Los Osos Junior High School

1555 El Morro Street

Los Osos

State park planners will explain the general plan process and the role of public involvement in developing the plan. A presentation of the draft Resource Element, highlighting the significant cultural and natural resources of the park, will include policies recommended by the Departmental staff for protection and management of these resources. An "issues and concerns" workshop will be held followed by a question and comment period.

like developed, what lands should remain in their natural condition, and which natural, historical and cultural values should be enhanced or interpreted. How can our parks be improved to meet your needs; what is good and bad about their operation and management?

Park planners will use this information to develop several alternative plans to be presented to you at a second workshop in February 1987. There you will be asked to evaluate the alternatives and help formulate a single plan. Our staff will then refine the single plan into a draft general plan for your review at a third public meeting in May 1987. The final document will be submitted to the State Park and Recreation Commission in Spring 1988. There, too, you will have an opportunity to comment on the plan.

General Plan Underway

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is developing a plan to guide the future of the state park units in the Morro Bay Area: Atascadero State Beach, Morro Strand State Beach, Morro Bay State Park, Montana de Oro State Park and Los Osos Oaks State Reserve.

The purpose of the plan will be to provide general guidelines for management of the resources and development of facilities at the parks. The general plan for these units will serve as a flexible, comprehensive and long-range planning document. To do this effectively the general plan must:

- identify the cultural and natural

resources of the parks.

- identify existing and future problems and provide solutions.
- determine land use, park development, and visitor activities which are compatible with the park and surrounding areas.
- determine the potential environmental impacts of the land uses and visitor activities.
- establish policies for maintenance and operation, protection and preservation of the resources, development of facilities and interpretation of resource values.

Throughout the general plan process, the public is a vital member of the planning team. Your participation is requested at the public workshops to be held during the next year. At our first meeting we need your help in identifying issues and concerns: what recreation opportunities are needed, what facilities you would

Resource Element Available

During the last year resource specialists from the Department of Parks and Recreation inventoried the resources of the Morro Bay Area state park units and wrote draft Resource Elements (the first section of the general plan document). The Resource Elements summarize the Resource Inventories and set forth specific policies for the proper management and protection of each unit's natural, cultural, scenic, and

General Plan Newsletter

recreational resources. This part of the general plan is written first so that it can act as a guide for developing other elements of the plan.

Key portions of the Resource Elements will be discussed at the public meeting on November 12. Copies of the document will be available for public review at the meeting or may be reviewed during the month of November at the Department of Parks and Recreation San Luis Obispo Coast District Office (3340 South Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo) or the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History at Morro Bay State Park.

User Survey

Many of you are aware that the Department of Parks and Recreation distributed a user survey to park visitors this summer. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends 5000 surveys were distributed at Montana de Oro and Morro Bay State Parks, Los Osos Oaks State Reserve and Atascadero State Beach. (There are no developed facilities at Morro Strand State Beach and therefore no way to get surveys to the users at this unit). The response has been tremendous with a return rate of almost 25%.

The purpose of the user survey was to generate information about the types of visitors to the units, what activities they participate in, what their problems are in using the parks, how visitors think the parks can be improved to better meet visitor needs.

We publish the results of the survey here. Be aware that the survey data may not reflect fully the kinds of use the parks receive nor the desires of all who use them. A good deal of

day-use occurs, especially by local residents, where the visitors make no contact with the entrance stations or campgrounds where the surveys were distributed. We hope that input from local residents attending the public workshops to be held in the next few months will give us a more complete picture of park use.

	Atascadero SB	Morro Bay SP	Montana de Oro SP	Los Osos Oaks SR
1. Which park unit are you visiting today?				
TOTAL RESPONSES: 1189	190	719	252	28
2. How often do you visit this park?				
First visit	50%	49%	30%	50%
1-6 times/year	45%	47%	52%	38%
Once/month	3%	1%	2%	4%
2-3 times/month	-	1%	6%	-
1-3 times/week	1%	1%	5%	4%
3-4 times/week	1%	-	2%	4%
No response	-	-	3%	-
3. How long does your visit usually last?				
A few days	47%	54%	55%	-
Overnight	43%	20%	14%	-
One week/more	5%	9%	13%	-
Less than hour	1%	13%	1%	21%
Less than day	2%	3%	15%	79%
No response	2%	1%	2%	-
4. Where do you live?				
Local	7%	8%	18%	64%
Out of State	17%	13%	3%	7%
North Coast Calif.	4%	1%	2%	-
Northeastern Calif.	2%	4%	1%	-
San Francisco Bay Area	6%	8%	5%	4%
Monterey Bay Area	2%	2%	1%	-
Central Valley	32%	17%	16%	4%
Santa Barbara-Ventura Area	2%	5%	17%	4%
Los Angeles Area	11%	22%	20%	10%
Orange-San Diego Area	10%	11%	8%	7%
Southeastern Calif.	2%	5%	6%	-
No response	5%	4%	3%	-
5. What is your age?				
8-24	4%	6%	8%	11%
25-34	18%	19%	23%	18%
35-44	23%	23%	33%	25%
45-54	13%	12%	17%	14%
55-64	20%	22.5%	9%	21%
65+	20%	17%	9%	11%
No response	2%	.5%	1%	-
6. What is your primary destination on this trip?				
This area	55%	62%	87%	96%
San Francisco and north	20%	16%	6%	-
LA and south	13%	8%	1%	4%
San Simeon/Big Sur	7%	11%	1%	-
Central Valley	4%	2%	1%	-
No response	1%	1%	4%	-

General Plan Newsletter

7A. Where did you stay overnight?

Morro Bay State Park	1%	69%	3%	4%
Montana de Oro State Park	1%	2%	78%	4%
Atascadero State Beach	80%	1%	-	-
City of Morro Bay	1%	7.7%	3%	-
SLO/Los Osos/Baywd Prk	-	2.6%	1%	-
San Simeon/Cambria	2%	3%	-	-
Local resident	5%	5.5%	11%	79%
Other	8%	8%	3%	13%
No response	2%	3%	2%	-

7B. Average Overnight Stay (for non-local visitors)

Nights	1.85	2.72	3	3.3
No response	20%	20%	7%	-

8. What type of accommodation did you use?

Motel	1%	9%	3%	10%
Tent	19%	27%	41%	4%
RV	71%	49%	37%	7%
B&B	-	5%	-	-
Friend's Home	3%	6%	2%	14%
Under the stars	1%	5%	2%	4%
Own home/local resident	4%	6%	11%	61%
No response	1%	2%	4%	-

9. How many people in your party?

Average size of party	2.7	2.9	3.5	2.1
-----------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----

10. How did you arrive at the park?

Car	34%	50%	60%	79%
RV	63%	48%	36%	7%
Bicycle	1%	5%	1%	4%
On foot	1%	1%	5%	10%
Motorcycle	1%	-	5%	-
Horseback	-	-	1%	-
No response	-	5%	1%	-

11. What activities do you want emphasized at the park?

The highest-rated activity listed first for each unit:

Atascadero SB	Morro Bay SP	Montana de Oro	Walking-75%
Camping-75%	Camping-40%	Camping-59%	Nature obs.-68%
Walking-46%	Walking-40%	Nature obs.-46%	Photo.-39%
Beachcombing-46%	Nature obs.-37%	Walking-41%	Hiking-39%
Nature Obs.-33%	Visit museum-33%	Hiking-36%	Birdwatching-25%
Sunbathing-32%	Beachcombing-21%	Beachcombing-30%	Picnicking-11%
Birdwatching-18%	Birdwatching-21%	Riding-30%	
Fishing-16%	Hiking-19%	Birdwatching-16%	
Photography-13%	Photography-15%	Photography-15%	
Swimming-11%	Fishing-15%	Sunbathing-9%	
Bicycling-7%	Picnicking-12%	Swimming-9%	

12. What do you think is special about this park? The top-rated 4 per unit:

Ocean	Scenery	Scenery	Quiet
Beach	Nature	Quiet	Nature
Relaxation	Quiet	Nature	Scenery
Scenery	Ocean	Ocean	Relaxation

13. What unique or fragile resources require special protection?

Response to this question indicated that many people know of important resources and understand the need to protect them. No new information about the resources was discovered.

14. What new or improved facilities are needed?

Atascadero	Montana de Oro
None-27%	None-37%
Showers-31%	Toilets-22%
San. sta.-23%	Interp. trail-22%
RV Camp-13%	Env. Ctr.-18%
Campstore-9%	Hiking trail-16%
Restrooms-7%	Tent Camp-16%
Cmpfire Ctr.-7%	Interp. Ctr.-16%
Tent Camp-6%	Horse trail-16%
	Hike-in Cmp-13%
Morro Bay	Campstore-12%
None-53%	Eq. Staging-12%
Restrooms-11%	Jr. Rgr. Prog.-11%
RV Camp-15%	Fam. Picnic-11%
Hiking trail-14%	Bike-in Cmp-10%
Campstore-13%	Showers-9%
Interp. trail-11%	Bicycle Trail-9%
Bicycle trail-11%	Horse Rental-9%
C.S./Shwrs.-10%	RV Camp-9%
Bike rental-9%	Group Camp-8%
Tent Camp-8%	Sani. station-8%

Los Osos Oaks

None-57%
Parking-21%
Interp. trail-14%
Restroom-11%
Signs-7%
No response-7%

15. What do you want more information about as you visit the park?

Atascadero Morro Bay Montana LosOsos deOro

Nothing	36%	24%	25%	43%
Local Resources	12%	18%	25%	14%
Natural Resources	35%	41%	59%	36%
Recreational Activities	29%	26%	20%	3%
No response	13%	18%	8%	11%

16. What is your general philosophy of land use at this park?

Minimum development	36%	27%	45%	39%
Leave as it is	28%	36%	36%	50%
Provide more recreation	7%	6%	2%	7%
Maximum development	20%	15%	12%	-
No response	9%	7%	5%	-

General Plan Newsletter

17. What detracts from your visit to this park?

Atascadero SB

- Nothing-31%
- Too crowded-16%
- No showers-10%
- Too small-8%
- Vandalism-8%
- Litter-3%
- Not enough facilities-7%
- No response-14%

Morro Bay SP

- Nothing-45%
- Too crowded-10%
- Too small-5%
- Traffic-5%
- Weather-5%
- Not enough facilities-4%
- Litter-3%
- No response-23%

Montana de Oro SP

- Nothing-40%
- Too small-21%
- Litter-9%
- Too crowded-8%
- Areas inaccessible-7%
- Vandalism-7%
- Not enough facilities-7%
- Weather-6%
- Traffic-6%
- Noise-5%
- Lack of flush toilets or showers-5%

Los Osos Oaks SR

- Nothing-54%
- Too small-11%
- Traffic-11%
- Hard to find-7%
- Not enough facilities-7%
- Litter-7%
- Vandalism-3%

18. What is the single most important change or improvement you would like to see at this park?

Suggestions made included a wide range of improvements. The ones included here represent a summary of those mentioned most often.

ATASCADERO STATE BEACH

- Hot showers
- Better campsites: larger sites, better screening, less parking lot atmosphere, fire rings and table for each site, RV hook-ups.
- Better reservation system

MORRO BAY STATE PARK

- More restrooms/showers
- Better restroom maintenance
- More hook-ups
- Bike trail
- Better campsites: larger, less crowded, more privacy; better screening; separate RV and tent areas.
- Control noise: enforce quiet hours, no generators, radios, barking dogs, group campers, or road noise.
- More campfire programs and activities with rangers.
- Control vehicle traffic through park.

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

- Improve restrooms: hot showers, flush toilets.
- Acquire more land to the south.
- More camping area/sites: larger campsites/better privacy, screening.
- Improve water system: provide running water, hose bibbs closer to sites.
- Improve Hazard Canyon horse camp facilities and road.
- Improve trails: better maintenance, keep bikes off, allow dogs on horse trails, provide trail maps.
- Improve facilities: develop tent camping in private land to the south; develop environmental and wilderness camping; separate RVs and tents; develop a park entrance with info; eliminate RV use; provide longer RV sites with hook-ups; park store and laundromat.
- Improve operations: hire more staff, control raccoons, enforce leash law, keep park cleaner, improve reservation system.
- Improve interpretation: provide more campfire programs, information, ranger hikes, nature activities and self-guided interpretive walks.
- Provide improved resource protection for the tidepools, oyster beds and mud flats; control poison oak, leave the eucalyptus trees.

LOS OSOS OAKS STATE RESERVE

- Safer access to Los Osos Valley Road; paved parking further from the highway.
- Restroom
- Better signing
- Longer trails
- A bike rack

19. What kind of place should this park be? The following is a selection of comments that reflect the range, diversity and sometimes conflicting responses received.

ATASCADERO STATE BEACH

- "Just like it is."
- "An overnight stop", and "A campground with hot showers, hook-ups and dump station."
- "Keep it natural, clean with park rangers giving talks on wildlife, sand dunes, tides."
- "A quiet place to sleep and enjoy the beach."

MORRO BAY STATE PARK

- "Just as it is."

"A quiet, natural setting for camping and relaxing."

"Nature's home: full of birds, squirrels, critters. Morro Bay is all it can be without major change. Campsites are not segregated enough to make it a true outdoor experience."

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

- "Leave it as it is: primitive, quiet, unspoiled, undeveloped."
- "Special place for horse people to camp and ride."
- "Environmental camping, hiking and undeveloped beaches."
- "It should stay as it is. Morro Bay State Park has hook-ups, showers and dump station for those needing such services. Atascadero State Beach has ocean camping. Montana de Oro is special as a primitive park- we need these!"

Montana de Oro is special as a primitive park: we need these!"

"RV hook-ups and more sites."

- "Larger."
- "Limited access. Keep the road bumpy and not well-paved."
- "Easy access to natural resources."

General Plan Newsletter

LOS OSOS OAKS STATE RESERVE

"As it is."
 "A natural preserve," "undeveloped sanctuary", "quiet and apart from the city", "a walk-in picnic area."

20. Additional Comments Again, it would be impossible to record all the comments received. Here is just a sampling:

ATASCADERO STATE BEACH

- Would like to see this park landscaped with native vegetation and shrubs. Plant between sites for privacy.
- One of our favorite state parks.
- Rangers friendly and helpful. Excellent attitude.
- Reservation system stinks!
- Cleaner restrooms please.
- Take away the tall smoke stacks.
- Length limit of 24' is not enforced.
- Remove the sand dunes to give better views of ocean.
- If you add hook-ups it will end up too crowded and noisy.

"Atascadero State Beach is one of our favorite state parks."

- Why do you give the closest ocean sites to tents? We made a reservation.
- Enforce no generators between 8PM and 10AM.
- Atascadero S.B. seems well-utilized. Its small size does not warrant expansion of facilities.

MORRO BAY STATE PARK

- We love this park! It is clean, well-kept, with COURTEOUS personnel, very clean restrooms.
- Go back to more rangers. They were always informative and pleasant. Now they are overworked and cranky.
- We were treated with friendliness. This is not always the case in State Parks.
- The park is deluged with RVs. I hope strong restrictions will be

placed on them. A maximum designation of 70% tents and 30% RV should be made. There are few developed sites for tents elsewhere in this area.

- The generators, road traffic, smoke, lack of privacy and inconsiderate group campers forced us to find a motel in the middle of the night.
- I would like to see all our State Parks developed to accommodate many more campers and RVS, with facilities for more hook-ups.
- Our first and last visit. We still don't know what we paid \$12 for.
- Large RVs with generators should go elsewhere. The State should not compete with commercial RV parks.

"Our first and last visit. Still don't know what we paid \$12 for."

- Morro Bay campground seems to need a rest, an opportunity for recuperation and intensive maintenance work.
- Shellfish deserve a break. How many otters do we need? Limit the otter population.
- The museum nature walks are great.

MONTANA DE ORO STATE PARK

- Acquire more land to the south.
- For us this park is one of the most beautiful and peaceful places in California. We sincerely hope it can stay like this.
- I would like running water and hot showers to make this area perfect.
- Don't add more facilities (even if the toilets stink!)
- After staying in some of the overcrowded state parks, it was very refreshing to be in this quiet, relatively unspoiled park. We will certainly come again. We loved the ocean views along the bluff trails, and the sightings of pelicans, seals, otters, and cormorants.
- I've camped all over the U.S. and this is the nicest campground I've been to, primitive but clean.
- This park has a tremendous

amount of land and very few campsites. There should not be any additional purchase of land until the present park is developed to accommodate more visitors.

"Let those who want to bring the city with them go elsewhere."

- Leave it as it is. Let those who want to bring the city with them go elsewhere. Any increased development and usage would decrease the quality of the area. There are plenty of people here already.
- We appreciate the large campsites.
- Ranger and hostess both were nice and helpful.
- Do not remove eucalyptus trees.
- Thin eucalyptus to restore native vegetation.

LOS OSOS OAKS SR

- I was shocked at how small this area is.
- To protect ground-nesting birds, remind people dogs are not allowed.
- I thought the trail markers were well-done, just enough for a self-guided trail.

Update

Update is published by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. For additional information direct your questions to Morro Bay Area State Park Units General Planning Team, P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-001. Attn: Jill Vanneman (916) 323-4269.

The Planning Process...

Where we are:

- Step 1 Organizing the Planning Job
- Step 2 Gathering Information
- Step 3 Developing Alternatives
- Step 4 Composing a Single Plan
- Step 5 CEQA Review Process
- Step 6 State Park and Commission
Hearing

State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation
Morro Bay Area State Park Units
General Planning Team
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001



Update

The General Plan Newsletter

Issue Two February 1987



Morro Bay Area State Park Units

For Your Information

If you are receiving *Update* for the first time, the California Department of Parks and Recreation is now in the process of preparing a comprehensive general plan for the five Morro Bay area state park units: Montana de Oro State Park, Morro Bay State Park, Atascadero State Beach, Morro Strand State Beach, and Los Osos Oaks State Reserve. On November 12, 1986, the first in a series of local public involvement workshops was held. During the summer of 1986 user surveys were also distributed to gather public concerns and ideas. This newsletter is published to inform you of the issues and concerns which have been identified, the progress of the planning process and of upcoming events. ■

First Public Meeting

One hundred twelve people attended our first public meeting on November 12, 1986. What a great turnout! We would like to thank each of you for your participation and for sharing your ideas with us. For such a large attendance we were exceptionally pleased with the orderly progress and productivity of the meeting.

The meeting began with an introduction of our departmental planning team and a discussion of the purpose and content of the general plan.

The draft Resource Element was presented, highlighting the significant cultural and natural resources of each unit. This discussion also included policies recommended by the departmental staff for protection and management of these resources. (The draft Resource Element can be reviewed at the Department of Parks and Recreation San Luis Obispo Coast District Office, 3220 South Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, or the Morro Bay Museum of Natural History at Morro Bay State Park).

Upcoming Public Workshop

The results of the user survey and first public workshop will help us to develop land use alternatives. These alternatives will contain specific proposals regarding such things as road alignments, parking improvements, camping capacities, day-use improvements, interpretive facilities, and marina or golf course alterations. We will present the proposed alternatives for your evaluation and discussion at the next public workshop which will be held:

**MARCH 18, 1987, 7 - 10 PM
LOS OSOS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
1555 EL MORRO STREET
LOS OSOS**

If you wish to communicate with us before then, write us at our return address, or call us at (916) 323-5067 or 323-4269.

General Plan Newsletter

After a brief question and answer period, workshop participants formed 14 separate groups. These groups spent the next hour and a half discussing specific park issues related to resources, camping, day-use, the Morro Bay S.P. Golf Course and marina, the Morro Bay park road, Camp K.E.E.P., interpretation, and other issues of concern identified by the group participants. Each work group then presented its ideas to the workshop as a whole. It was a lengthy but very productive evening.

The following is a summary of the comments, concerns, and ideas expressed by workshop participants as well as others who have contacted us. These comments are not intended to represent a public consensus on any particular issue, but simply an indication of the variety of issues and concerns expressed.

Resource Issues

- Do not remove eucalyptus trees.
- Gradually replace some eucalyptus with natives.
- Plant some oak trees in treeless areas.
- Protect the water quality of bay and wetlands.
- Do not replant sand dunes.
- Maintain wilderness and pristine nature of Montana de Oro.
- Protect tide pools.
- Control obnoxious weeds.

- Eliminate hunting.
- Assess impact of hunting on park resources.
- Protect Monarch butterfly habitat.

Camping

- Update existing facilities rather than expand.
- Separate one-night campers from others.
- Improve and expand campgrounds.
- Provide more camping at Montana de Oro.
- Need more restrooms in all units.
- Reopen Chorro Willows group camp area.
- Develop water at Montana de Oro.
- Develop new camping east of South Bay Blvd.
- Eliminate enroute camping in marina parking lot.
- Keep children away from Orcas St. bndge at Atascadero S. B.
- Have year around camp hosts.
- Provide more garbage containers at Atascadero / Montana de Oro.
- Eliminate over-use of existing campgrounds.
- Develop additional environmental campsites at Montana de Oro.
- Provide R. V. camping on new property east of South Bay Blvd.
- Provide more bike camping.

Day-use Facilities

- Expand facilities at Montana de Oro.
- Improve poorly located Morro Bay facilities.
- Provide emergency telephones.
- Provide better maintenance of existing facilities.
- Improve day-use access to sand dunes.
- Improve day-use launch ramp at marina.
- Improve parking and day-use facilities at Los Osos Oaks.
- Develop more facilities at Morro Strand.
- Improve and expand facilities at Hazard Cyn.
- Need day-use area at marina.
- Need picnic area at Morro Rock.
- Improve separation of day-use and camping.

Morro Bay Golf Course and Marina

- Do not expand marina, improve it.
- Improve safety of marina.
- Retain a percentage of the slips for live-aboards.
- Dredge and upgrade marina.
- Add more slips to marina.
- Improve marina area for recreation.
- Provide more shore facilities for marina users.
- Need dry storage racks for small boats.
- Provide pump-out facility.

General Plan Newsletter

- Use reclaimed water on golf course.
- Need a harbor master at marina.
- Leave golf course as is.

Morro Bay Park Road

- Widen roadway.
- Need a bike path.
- Provide walking and bike path on inside of road.
- Put speed bumps on road.
- Limit speed to 15 MPH.
- Take trees out on curve.
- Consider one-way traffic flow.
- Upgrade road through golf course.
- Close road through golf course.

Camp K.E.E.P.

- Keep it as it is for children.
- Open it to the public if schools can still use it.
- Add a separate environmental center for the public.
- Expand and allow permanent buildings.
- Do not make it permanent.
- If expanded it should be available to others.
- It should be open to the general public.
- Use old CCC camp area at Camp San Luis.
- Use Spooner house for environmental education.
- Develop public environmental education in another location.
- Open it to all SLO county schools, but not the

general public.

Interpretation

- Provide maps for things of special interest.
- Need more self-guided tours.
- Provide more trail signs.
- Expand campfire program.
- Need more interpretive staff and museum curator.
- Provide interpretation of Kangaroo Rats.
- Continue doing a great job.
- Enlarge auditorium at museum.
- Montana de Oro needs Interpretive center.
- Remove interpretive signs at Los Osos Oaks because of continued vandalism.
- Ensure that contemporary museum standards are met.
- Provide more printed hand-outs.
- Improve interpretive displays at museum.
- Have more rotating displays at museum.
- Provide more guides than more signs.
- Provide hands-on aquarium at museum.

Other Issues

- No hunting in bird sanctuary.
- Do not allow damming of feeder streams.
- Provide for hang gliding east of S. Bay Blvd..
- Prohibit off-road vehicles

in any park.

- Purchase Fields ranch at Montana de Oro.
- Provide more patrol staff for public safety
- Reconstruct Black Hill trail.
- Develop mountain bike trails.
- Restrict dogs in sensitive resource areas.
- Screen ranger residence area at Montana de Oro from public view.
- Provide safe bike trail to Montana de Oro.
- Reopen bay channel north of Morro Rock. ■

New Planner

On December 2, 1986, a new staff member joined our planning team. Jim Quayle is a licensed Landscape Architect with over 12 years of experience. He worked as a project manager in our Acquisition Division before coming to the Development Division. His experience with the most recent acquisitions for the local state park units has increased his already strong familiarity with many issues in the Morro Bay area. His initial familiarity dates from the four years he spent as a student at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and the two years he worked for a developer in Avila Beach. ■

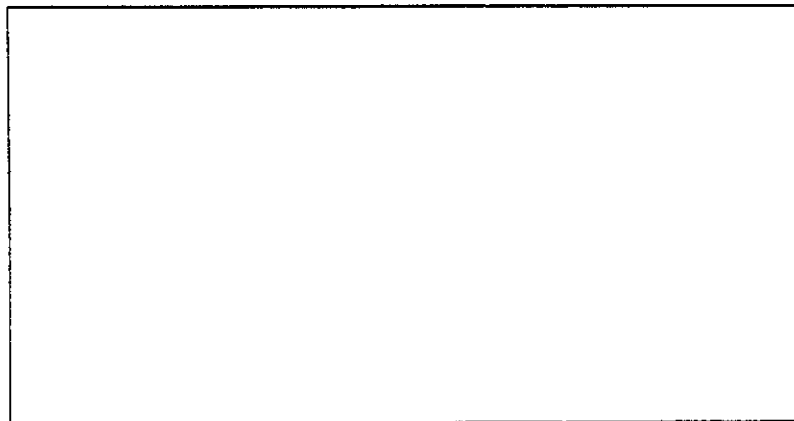
General Plan Newsletter

THE PLANNING PROCESS...

Where we are:

- Step 1 Organizing the planning job
- Step 2 Gathering information
- Step 3 Developing alternatives
- Step 4 Composing a single plan
- Step 5 CEQA review process
- Step 6 State Park and Recreation
Commission Hearing

State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation
Morro Bay Area State Park Units
General Planning Team
P. O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001



Update

The General Plan Newsletter

Issue Three June 1987



Current Planning Status

Since our last public meeting, held March 18 in Los Osos, the planning team has been busy compiling and analyzing the individual and group reports prepared by the workshop participants. We've answered a number of letters from the public resulting from the workshop, and we met again with various city and county officials and staff. The Docent Council (of the San Luis Obispo Coast Area State Parks) invited the planning team to an April meeting at the Morro Bay Natural History Museum to give us its thoughts about planning for the parks.

The planning team is now attempting to develop a single plan for each of the Morro Bay Area state park units based on appropriate park planning and design guidelines, statewide recreation needs, and public input from the user survey results and the comments and reactions to the alternative plans that we've heard so far. The single plans will be presented for public review and evaluation at meetings to be held in August. We will tell you more about these meetings and the single plans in the next issue of *Update*.

To our new readers...

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is preparing a comprehensive general plan for the five Morro Bay area state park units. Public involvement is a crucial component of the planning process. *Update* is published at critical points in the planning process so that you know what the planning team is doing, what issues and ideas have been expressed to us by the public, and when upcoming meetings will be held so that you will have an opportunity to participate.

During the summer of 1986 a user survey was distributed to visitors at the Morro Bay area state park units. The results of almost 1200 responses were summarized in Issue One of *Update*. Issue Two reported the results of the first local public meeting held November 12, 1986 to gather public comments and concerns regarding planning of the park units and to present the draft Resource Elements, which highlight the significant cultural and natural resources of the units along with recommended policies for the protection and management of those resources. This issue of *Update* reports the results of the last public workshop, held March 18, 1987, when the planning team presented alternative land use and facilities plans for each unit and asked the workshop participants to evaluate the different plans.

March Workshop Results

Between 200 and 250 people attended the last workshop, a much greater turn-out than we had anticipated. Most written and oral comments from the public concerned Morro Bay State Park. During the meeting the planning team heard a lot of vocal opposition to any changes to the golf course. The following is a summary of both

the workgroup and individual workbook reports.

Montana de Oro

Thirteen individuals turned in evaluation forms and another twenty-three people worked together in groups of 5 to 7 to evaluate the Montana de Oro alternatives. Each group agreed by consensus on its preferred alternative for eight different areas of the park: Pecho Road, Hazard Canyon and Sandspit Beach Access, Hazard Canyon Horse Camp, Camp KEEP, Spoons Cove, Islay Creek, Coon Creek, and Trails.

Workshop Results

Pecho Road

Group 2 preferred that only minor safety improvements be made to the road, while Groups 2, 3, and 4 voted to widen the road and provide bike lanes. Group 3 was concerned that any road improvements not lead to increased speed. Groups 2 and 3 thought certain turn-outs along the road should be developed as vista points and for additional day-use parking. Group 1 thought a park entrance station was a good idea, but without fee collection.

The results of the 13 individual evaluation forms turned in are summarized below for Pecho Road.

Minor improvements: 5.
Widen road/provide bike lanes: 9.
Develop turn-outs along road: 8.
Develop entrance station: 7.

Hazard Canyon and Sandspit Beach Access

All four groups agreed on the concept of eliminating park access from Army Road and developing a new sandspit parking area from a new access road about 1/2 mile south of Army Road. All four groups agreed on eliminating roadside beach access parking at Hazard Canyon, and developing a new 80-car parking area and restroom south of the existing beach access trail. Group 2 was concerned that there be one designated beach access trail at Hazard Canyon to reduce bluff erosion caused by the use of several existing trails. Group 1 suggested that a phone be provided at the parking area.

Individual Report Results

Develop new 80-car parking lot: 10.
Eliminate Army Road access; develop new access road and parking area: 11.

Hazard Canyon Horse Camp

Groups 1, 2, and 4 like the idea of a day-use equestrian staging area with a restroom and picnic sites. Group 1 thought the existing access road should be improved or a new one developed, and that the existing horse camp facilities should be improved and the capacity increased. Group 1 also suggested that parking be provided in this area for hikers and mountain bikers. Group 3 thought the area is fine just the way it is, but needs better maintenance. Groups 1, 2, and 3 suggested that a phone be provided.

Individual Report Results

Improve access: 6.
Develop day-use horse staging area, restroom and picnic sites: 9.
Upgrade horse camp and increase capacity: 4.

Camp KEEP (Kern County Environmental Education Program)

All four groups preferred that an environmental education center be developed for use by many groups and school districts, but that Kern County continue to operate on an interim basis. Group 2 thought that the existing ranger residences should be relocated. Group 3 suggested that the Camp KEEP area be designed to accommodate a youth hostel as well as an environmental education center, while Group 4 thought the area would be suitable for a group camp/day-use facility.

Individual Report Results

Develop environmental education center: 12.
Relocate existing ranger residences: 7.
Develop youth hostel: 2.
Develop multi-use group camp/day-use facility: 2.

Spooners Cove

Group 3 wanted the area to remain as is with minor access improvements and interpretive signs. Groups 1, 2, and 4 thought the existing facilities should be upgraded, although each suggested different ways of doing that. Paving, increased picnic sites, permanent restrooms, outdoor showers, and interpretive signs were preferred by Group 1, while Group 2 said "no showers and no paving". Group 4 thought parking on the beach should be eliminated, but liked the other proposed improvements.

Individual Report Results

Remain as is and make minor access improvements: 3.
Upgrade facilities: 10.

Islay Creek

Group 3 would like the existing campground to remain as is. Groups 1, 2, and 4 thought the facility should be upgraded with improved restrooms, running water, and landscape screening. Adaptation of the ranch house as a combination park office and interpretive center is a good idea according to Groups 2, 3 and 4. Groups 1 and 2 voted to remove the barn in Islay Creek Canyon, although Group 2 wanted it to remain "until really dangerous". Group 4 wanted to leave the barn alone while Group 3 suggested that it be improved for use as a rain and shade shelter.

Individual Report Results

Campground to remain as is: 3.
Upgrade campground and provide restrooms, showers, landscape screening: 9.
Adapt ranch house as park office/interpretive center: 11.
Remove Islay Creek barn: 2.
Leave barn/improve it: 5.

Workshop Results

Coon Creek

Three groups, 1, 2, and 3, agreed on upgrading the Coon Creek day-use facilities with a paved parking area, increased picnic sites and permanent restrooms. Group 2, however, thought that only additional picnic sites are needed.

Groups 1 and 3 favored development of a new 50-75 unit campground, but both groups felt it should be "primitive". Only one group wanted interpretive panels added to the coastal bluff trailhead.

Individual Report Results

Upgrade day-use facilities: pave, increase picnic sites, permanent restrooms: 11.
Develop new 50 to 75-unit campground: 4.
Add interpretive panels to Bluff Trail: 2.

Trails

All four groups favored establishment of the State Coastal Trail link through the park. Group 1 thought mountain bike trails and additional equestrian trails should be established. Group 2 was unable to reach a consensus regarding trails: "Part of the group feels strongly that equestrian and mountain bike use should be maintained and expanded. Others are concerned about environmental damage from these uses". Group 3 favored establishment of additional trails, designating existing trails as "multiple use", and installation of trail yield signs. Group 4 thought that some existing trails outside sensitive areas should be designated multiple-use to accommodate mountain bike use. Groups 2 and 3 like the concept of a system of trail camps, although Group 3 was concerned about the fire hazard.

Individual Report Results

Establish additional equestrian trails: 7.
Establish State Coastal trail link through park: 13.
Establish or designate mountain bike trails: 11.
Develop trail camps: 8.

Los Osos Oaks State Reserve

One group was formed to evaluate the different plans for this unit. A number of individuals comments were also received.

The group consensus, along with six individual comments, was that parking should not be provided on the interior of the unit, roadside parking should be provided to replace that to be eliminated by the county widening of Los Osos Valley Road, and that additional land should be acquired when available to provide parking that will not impact the unit resources. The group and seven individuals recommended that additional trails be provided in the western portion of this unit. Other comments / suggestions: provide a unit sign (four people), leave the unit as it is (1 person), provide parking within the unit (1 person), add a restroom, limit dog use, no cutting of eucalyptus (1 comment each).

Morro Bay State Park

Five groups (a total of almost 40 people) worked together to arrive at a consensus for each area of the park. In addition, a large number of individual evaluations were received which expressed concern

about one or more areas of the park, such as the golf course. It has been difficult to evaluate some of the information we received for various reasons. However, for many areas a consensus is quite clear.

Morro Rock

All five groups agreed that the parking and turn-around area on the south side of the rock should be improved and interpretation provided. 19 individual comments supported this concept, 10 individuals wanted the area to remain as is. Additional suggestions: reopen the harbor entrance north of the rock (2 people), widen the road to the rock (1 person).

Vehicular Access and Circulation

The consensus of three groups and 10 individuals was to close park roads to thru traffic. One group and 11 individuals thought existing roads should be left as is with minor safety improvements. Development of a bypass road was supported by 10 people. Nine individuals recommended that the golf course road be widened along with improvements such as an overpass/underpass for golfer safety. Additional concerns/suggestions: maintain open access to the museum (1 group and 8 individual comments), develop a bike path through the park (1 group and 1 individual), improve both park roads (1 group), realign South Bay Boulevard to the east (2 individuals).

Heron Rookery

The majority of responses favored improvement of interpretation at the rookery (four groups and seven individuals). Two groups and 19 individuals wanted it left as it is. One group and one individual

Workshop Results

recommended that the existing parking area be removed. Five responses recommended trail improvements to accommodate the handicapped.

Windy Cove

Two groups and 10 individuals responded that they want the area to remain as is. Improved trail connections from this area to the museum and the campground were preferred by 3 groups and 8 individuals. Additional suggestions: relocate the existing parking (1 group and 5 individuals), provide a picnic area (5 people).

Natural History Museum White Point

All five groups and 23 individual comments supported updating the museum displays and realignment of the trail to the top of White Point to avoid archeological resources. Additional suggestions: Enlarge the museum theatre (2 groups and 5 individuals), remove trees from the rock (1 group and 1 individual), provide more museum staff (1 group and 1 individual), increase museum parking (2 individuals), eliminate the trail to White Point (1 person).

Golf Course

This area of the park received the largest number of comments. Four of the 5 groups, along with 30 individuals, did not wish to see the golf course changed. Three groups and 11 individuals concurred that the golf course parking be expanded and improved. Twelve individuals recommended that an additional nine holes be added to the course. One group wanted a trail developed for the interpretation of the Monarch butterfly habitat. Other recommendations: realign holes 14 and 15 to allow some expansion of the campground (1 person), continue use of non-

potable water for golf-course irrigation (one group), realign the golf course parking lot (2 people), relocate the back nine holes behind Black Hill (1 person), realign holes 13, 14, and 15 (1 person), increase fees for non-county golfers, correct vehicle/golfer conflict between holes 2 and 3.

Marina

Three of the five groups and 13 individuals want the existing marina retained and improved. Two of the groups, along with 13 individuals, would like to see a small-boat launch ramp installed. Two groups and 7 individuals recommended that picnic facilities be added in this area. Two groups and 7 individuals also want enroute camping eliminated in the marina area. One group and 5 individuals want additional slips provided. One group and 2 individuals asked that the area be left as it is.

Marsh Parking Area (Hunters Lot)

Three groups and 6 people want interpretive displays, trails, and a boardwalk to be added to the area. One group and six people recommended that parking be upgraded with access provided from the marina. One group and 2 people would like to see picnic sites and a restroom provided in this area. One group and 5 people would like to see parking eliminated. One person was opposed to a boardwalk or any additional trails in the marsh.

Campground

All five groups agreed that a permanent group camp should be developed. Two groups and 6 individuals felt that the existing campground should be improved but not enlarged. Two groups and 13 people felt that it should be left as is. One group and 6 individuals felt that the campground should be

improved and enlarged. Other comments / recommendations: relocate all camping to the east of South Bay Boulevard (2 people), expand camping east of the existing campground (2 people), enlarge other campgrounds in the Morro Bay area (1 person), remove trees in the campground, develop a bike path and exercise trail in the campground (1 person), locate RV camping near the freeway on the back side of Black Hill.

Black Hill

Four of the five groups and 18 persons would like to have trailhead signing and connections to the existing campground improved. Three of the groups along with 4 individuals would like an interpretive display. Other suggestions: enlarge the parking for a school bus turn-around (1 group and 4 individuals), eliminate vehicular access (4 individuals), leave area as is (2 people), control trail erosion (1 person).

Operations, Maintenance, and Staff Residence Areas

Three of the groups and 8 individuals would like a centralized administrative facility located on Turri Road. One group and 9 individuals desire that these areas remain as they are. One group expressed concern about visual esthetics regardless of what is done. One individual suggested that staff housing be relocated rather than eliminated.

Chorro Willows

Three of the groups and six individuals want a small day-use parking area developed. One group and twelve individuals want trail access only in this area. One group and two individuals want RV camping developed in this area. Three individuals want the area

Workshop Results

raised and permanent group camping developed here.

Baptista Ranch

Three groups and 8 individuals want only parking, interpretive exhibits, and trails developed on this property. Two groups and 12 individuals want a mountain bike trail and other trails developed. One group, along with 6 individuals, recommended that hang-gilding be allowed on this property. One group and 3 others want the property left as is. Five people want the property used for day-use and enroute camping. Other suggestions: no equestrian trails (2 people), develop an 18-hole golf course (1 person).

South Bay Blvd.

Four of the five groups recommended that day-use continue with improved access and interpretation. One group and 6 individuals would like a portion of this area returned to marsh habitat. One person opposed any marsh interpretive panels in this area.

Morro Strand State Beach

Not enough interest was expressed in the alternative plans for this unit to form a workgroup, although 3 individuals filled out evaluation forms. All three recommended establishment of the Old Creek area as a

natural/wildlife habitat area. One person thought the Studio Drive parking should be removed, while two people preferred to see it retained, with additional landscaping and safety improvements. Two people preferred additional amenities such as picnic sites, fire rings, outdoor showers, and interpretive shelter/panels. One person thought the area should be designated as an underwater park.

Atascadero State Beach

Only individual comments were received for this unit. Twelve people made 31 comments about various areas of this park.

Campground

None of the alternative options for the campground received more than two votes.

Coastal Access Points

Three people recommended that a stairway be added at Yerba Buena and Beachcomber. One person supported development of a stairway at Beachcomber and Orcas Street. One person expressed concern that parking be provided near all beach access points. One person recommended that access from Beachcomber be eliminated.

Cloisters Site

Four of the twelve comments received for this area

recommended that the existing parking area be upgraded and paved for 50-75 vehicles and that a permanent restroom and interpretive material be installed. Three others recommended that a picnic area be installed. Three others also expressed that vehicular access to the sand dune to the south should be eliminated. Other suggestions included providing fencing, signing, designated pedestrian beach access, dune stabilization plantings, an entrance station and additional camping, and state purchase of the VRM property.

Other Recommendations

Three individuals concurred that the existing name is confusing and should be changed to be combined with Morro Strand State Beach. Two other comments were received to designate off-shore lands as an underwater park.

Update

Update is published by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. For additional information, direct your questions to Morro Bay Area State Park Units General Planning Team, P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-001. Attn: Jim Quayle (916) 323-5067, or Jill Vanneman (916) 323-4269.



The Planning Process...

Where we are:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Step 1 | Organizing the Planning Job |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Step 2 | Gathering Information |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Step 3 | Developing Alternatives |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Step 4 | Composing a Single Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Step 5 | CEQA Review Process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Step 6 | State Park and Recreation
Commission Hearing |



State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942898
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Update

The General Plan Newsletter

Issue Four August 1987

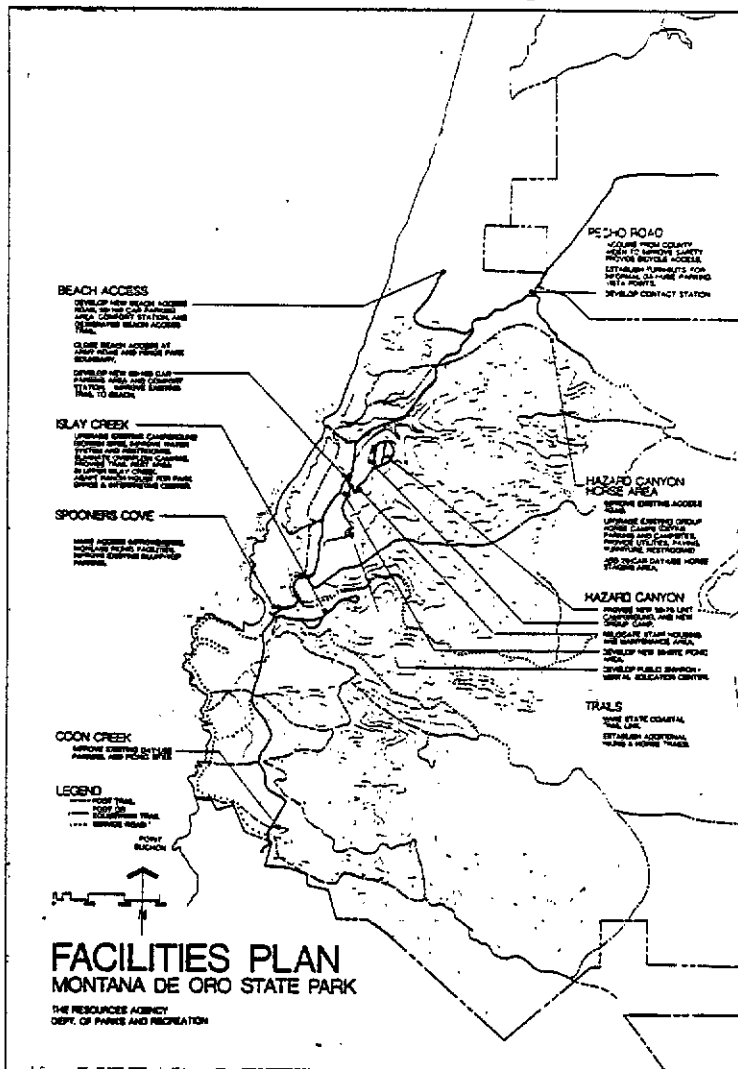


General Plan Progress...

Planners from the California Department of Parks and Recreation have been working since April, 1986, with the people of the Morro Bay area in an effort to prepare general plans for the Morro Bay area state park units that will meet the needs of both local residents and statewide users. Alternative plans were prepared from the information collected at workshops held in Los Osos in November, 1986. These alternative plans were evaluated in March, 1987, in a workshop at which the people told our planners what should be in the final plan. A single plan for each of the park units is summarized in this issue of *Update* and will be available for review and comments at a public meeting in September (see back for details). ■

Final Proposals: The Single Plans

This issue of *Update* summarizes the planning team's recommendations for changes or improvements in facilities at the Morro Bay area state park units. Recommendations for resource preservation and management policies at the parks were presented at the first public meeting.



Montana de Oro State Park
Several policies are recommended in the Resource Element for protection of the natural and cultural resources of this park, including:

- designation of the barrier dune complex as a natural preserve;
 - acquisition of the watershed lands of upper Hazard, Islay, and
- (Continued on page 2).

Final Plan

Coon Creeks;

- restoration of degraded riparian areas;
- protection of the unit's 16 rare or endangered plant species, and development of management programs, when appropriate, for animal species that are threatened, endangered or of special concern;
- management of the Coon Creek / Islay Creek roadless area in a manner consistent with long-term perpetuation of its wilderness character; and,
- nomination of the sand dunes' 30 prehistoric archeological sites to the National Register of Historic Places as an Archeological District.

In conjunction with protection of the sandspit and the endangered kangaroo rat habitat, the Facilities Plan for Montana de Oro recommends eliminating public park access from Army Road in an effort to control illegal OHV use and resultant erosion and habitat destruction. The plan proposes that the park boundary be fenced, with only emergency vehicle access to the beach allowed, and that kangaroo rat habitat be restored. To provide continued beach access to this portion of the unit's coastline, the plan recommends development of a new parking area and access road off Pecho Road to the south.

Beach access at Hazard Canyon will continue, although a new parking area will be established south of the canyon, across from the entrance road to Camp KEEP, while the existing trail to the beach from the south side will be improved. This proposal will improve visitor safety and eliminate the unsightly appearance of cars parked along this narrow stretch of road.

The plan calls for development of an environmental education center just south of the existing Camp KEEP facility, and a new 50-75 unit family campground and small group camp just north of Camp KEEP. The existing ranger residences will be re-

located to what is now Camp KEEP, as will the park's storage / maintenance area (now at the Spooner Ranch). The plan also proposes a small day-use picnic area (20 sites) where the ranger residences are now located. Locating new facilities in the general Camp KEEP area will orient new visitor recreation access and use to the primary beach resource which is located north of the mouth of Hazard Canyon. The proposed location of the new facilities will also concentrate new development in an area where the natural scene has already been impacted by human use and where existing trees and landform will minimize visual impact.

The existing campground at Islay Creek will remain, without expansion, but with improvements to provide more screening between sites and better sanitary facilities. The Spooner Ranch House will be improved to serve dual use as both an interpretive center and park office.

One of the plan's recommendations is to designate the unit's offshore lands as an underwater park. Spooners Cove is now heavily used by scuba divers, since the primary underwater resource is located between Spooners Cove and Point Buchon. Minimal new facilities to be provided at Spooners Cove as part of the underwater park designation would include a changing room and outdoor shower for scuba divers. Additional picnic sites and minor access and parking improvements are the only other changes proposed for this area.

The plan also proposes improvement of the bluff-top parking area above Spooners Cove, the addition of picnic sites and improvement of sanitary facilities and parking at Coon Creek.

The plan proposes few changes to the Horse Camp in Hazard Canyon: widening of the existing access road and upgrading of the existing camp-

sites, sanitary facilities, and utilities. The one new facility recommended for this area is a 20-car day-use horse staging area.

Trail proposals include development of a coastal trail link, establishment of additional hiking and horse trails, and development of a rest area in upper Islay Creek where the existing barn is located.

The plan also recommends acquiring Pecho Road from the County to be operated and maintained as a park road and improved to provide bicycle access.

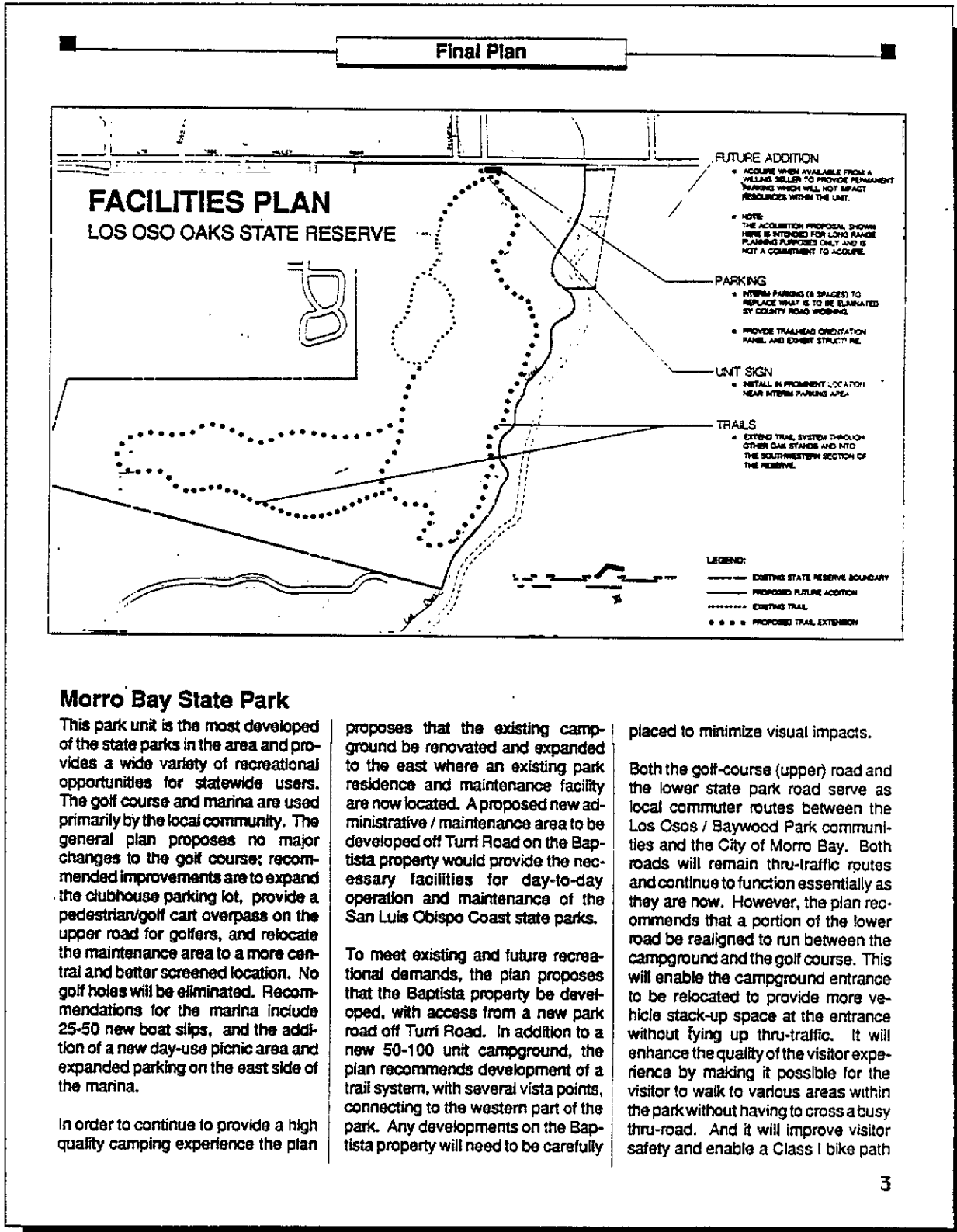
Los Osos Oaks S.R.

The plan proposes that interim parking be developed along Los Osos Valley Road when County road widening takes place. Parking for 4-8 cars would be located approximately 100 feet east of the current head-in parking. The plan recommends that a small piece of property to the east of the reserve be purchased to provide safe and adequate permanent parking facilities which will not impact resources within the unit.

Other proposals for the unit include the installation of a park sign, expansion of the trail system, and addition of an interpretive panel at the new parking area.

Update

Update is published by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. For additional information, direct your questions to Jim Quayle (916) 323-5067, or Jill Vanneman (916) 323-4289. Or write to them: Morro Bay Area State Park Units Planning Team, P.O. Box 94896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001.



Morro Bay State Park

This park unit is the most developed of the state parks in the area and provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities for statewide users. The golf course and marina are used primarily by the local community. The general plan proposes no major changes to the golf course; recommended improvements are to expand the clubhouse parking lot, provide a pedestrian/golf cart overpass on the upper road for golfers, and relocate the maintenance area to a more central and better screened location. No golf holes will be eliminated. Recommendations for the marina include 25-50 new boat slips, and the addition of a new day-use picnic area and expanded parking on the east side of the marina.

In order to continue to provide a high quality camping experience the plan

proposes that the existing campground be renovated and expanded to the east where an existing park residence and maintenance facility are now located. A proposed new administrative / maintenance area to be developed off Turri Road on the Baptista property would provide the necessary facilities for day-to-day operation and maintenance of the San Luis Obispo Coast state parks.

To meet existing and future recreational demands, the plan proposes that the Baptista property be developed, with access from a new park road off Turri Road. In addition to a new 50-100 unit campground, the plan recommends development of a trail system, with several vista points, connecting to the western part of the park. Any developments on the Baptista property will need to be carefully

placed to minimize visual impacts.

Both the golf-course (upper) road and the lower state park road serve as local commuter routes between the Los Osos / Baywood Park communities and the City of Morro Bay. Both roads will remain thru-traffic routes and continue to function essentially as they are now. However, the plan recommends that a portion of the lower road be realigned to run between the campground and the golf course. This will enable the campground entrance to be relocated to provide more vehicle stack-up space at the entrance without tying up thru-traffic. It will enhance the quality of the visitor experience by making it possible for the visitor to walk to various areas within the park without having to cross a busy thru-road. And it will improve visitor safety and enable a Class I bike path

Final Plan

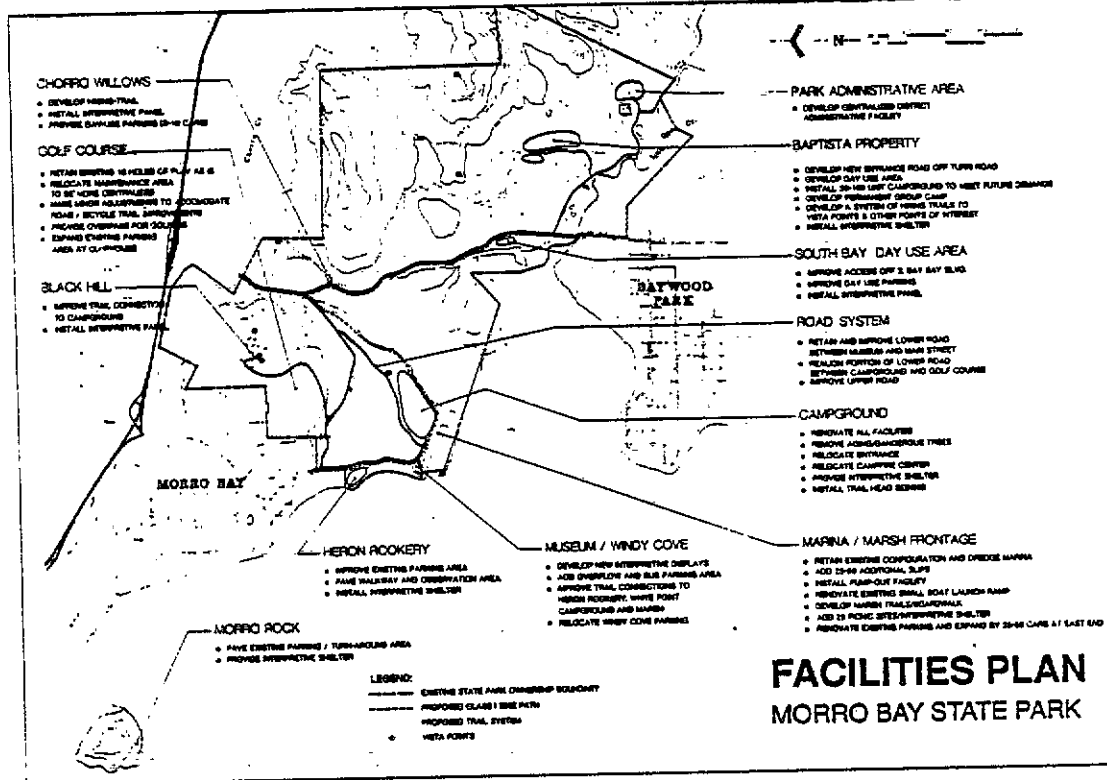
and a hiking trail to be placed along the marsh without any major grading immediately adjacent to the marsh. Along the marsh the proposed road realignment would be at a higher elevation, thereby maximizing scenic views of the marsh. Two roadside parking areas are proposed for viewing and access to the marsh edge. A portion of the existing alignment of the lower road is not wide enough to safely allow vehicles to stop and park for viewing the marsh nor to adequately accommodate both a road and a separate bicycle / pedestrian trail.

The plan recommends development of a bus and overflow parking area for the Museum of Natural History. Trails from the heron rookery, campground, and marsh should be oriented to the museum. Due to archeological values at White Point, physical limitations, and engineering considerations, expansion of the museum is not proposed.

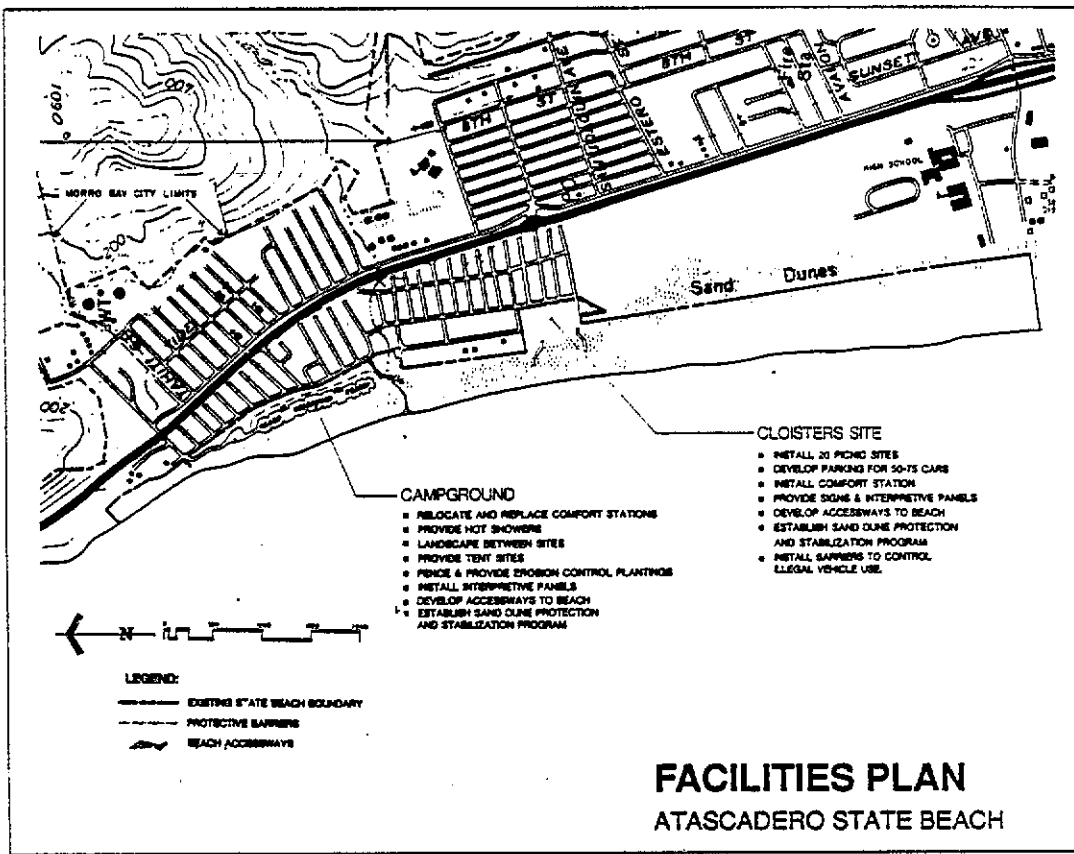
These are the major proposals of the single plan for Morro Bay State Park. Additional recommendations are shown on the map.

Atascadero State Beach

Due to the great demand for camping in the area, the plan proposes that the existing campground continue to serve this need rather than being converted partially or fully to day-use as was proposed in one of the "alternatives" plans. The plan proposes formalizing and improving the appearance of the existing day-use at "The Cloisters" site. Development of beach accessways for day-users is proposed at two locations near the campground. See other specific recommendations on the plan.

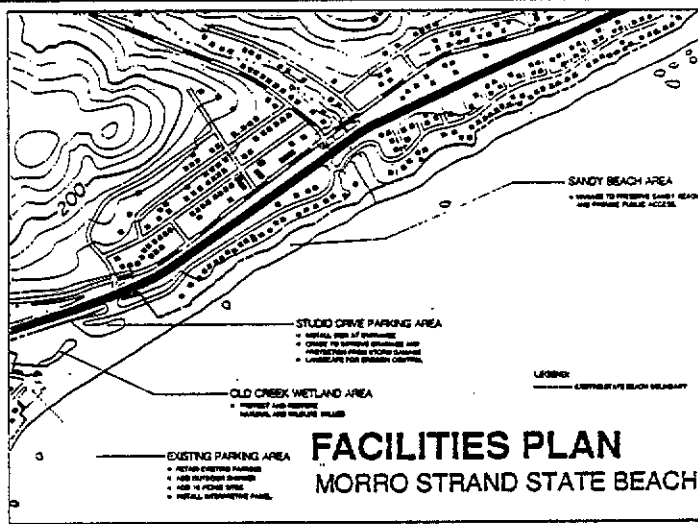


Final Plan



Morro Strand S.B.

This unit will continue to serve only day-use recreation needs. No new permanent facilities are proposed, primarily because the beach-level elevation of the unit exposes it to storm wave damage. Recommendations consist of enhancing and protecting the existing use areas.





Upcoming Public Meetings

Plans for the five Morro Bay Area state park units will be heard on different evenings.

**Montana de Oro State Park
and Los Osos Oaks State Re-
serve plans will be presented:**

**Tuesday
September 1 7PM
Veterans Building
209 East Surf Street
Morro Bay**

**Plans for Morro Bay State Park,
Atascadero and Morro Strand
State Beaches will be presented:**

**Wednesday
September 2 7PM
Veterans Building
209 East Surf Street
Morro Bay**

This is your last opportunity to comment on the plans and make revisions before they go to the printers. After publication, the plans will be reviewed by public agencies, interest groups and concerned individuals. Then they will go to the State Park and Recreation Commission with staff recommendation for approval in Spring, 1988. The planning staff believes the plans reflect the desires of the people of the Morro Bay area and the state for resource preservation and quality recreational experiences. Please come and share your thoughts with us in this important final phase of the planning process.



State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Update

The General Plan Newsletter

Issue Five June 1988



Park Commission To Take Action on Plans

The California State Park and Recreation Commission will take action on the proposed preliminary general plans and draft environmental impact reports for Morro Bay and Montana de Oro State Parks at a meeting to be held June 10, 1988, in the City of Morro Bay. These documents detail the single plans presented to the public at meetings held in Morro Bay in September 1987. Those people who made requests for the plans in writing or at the public meetings received copies through the mail. In conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act, notice of the 45-day public review period was also given through newspaper announcements. Although the formal review period has ended, copies of the documents may still be seen at the San Luis Obispo Coast District Office of the Department of Parks and Recreation, 3220 S. Higuera Street, Suite 311, San Luis Obispo, and at the County Public Library, 625 Harbor Street, Morro Bay. Interested persons are invited to comment on the preliminary general plans at the Commission meeting.

Revised Eucalyptus Policy for Montana de Oro

Following public review of the draft general plans, the Department has revised the proposed eucalyptus management policy for Montana de Oro State Park. Many people in the Morro Bay area voiced opposition to the original policy because they believed it would have

allowed for the immediate removal of all or most of the eucalyptus in the park to restore native vegetation.

More than 80 percent of the eucalyptus trees will be retained until further studies are conducted and trial restoration projects are evaluated. The revised policy allows for continuation of the existing eucalyptus containment program and development of a small-scale interim eucalyptus management program. The containment program is designed to prevent eucalyptus from spreading further into and displacing more native vegetation. The interim program would allow for removal of trees in the Hazard Canyon riparian zone and in trial restoration sites (totaling no more than 16 acres) to evaluate the effectiveness and cost efficiency of various methods of tree removal and revegetation.

Under the proposed interim program, no eucalyptus would be removed until specific plans are prepared and reviewed under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. In addition, interim projects would be subject to approval under the coastal development permit process.

Thank you...

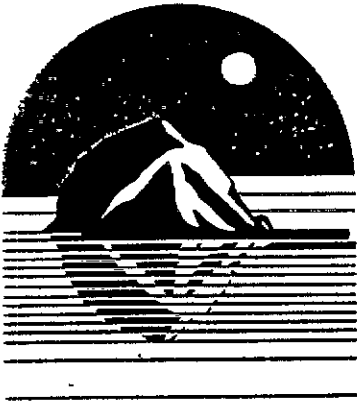
... for your participation and cooperation throughout the preparation of these general plans. With your continued support and involvement during implementation of the plans' proposals, the Department of Parks and Recreation can provide greater resource protection, visitor service, and improved recreational use to the people of California.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
California State Park and Recreation Commission

DATE: Friday, June 10, 1988
TIME: 9:30 A.M.
PLACE: The Inn at Morro Bay

The California State Park and Recreation Commission will hold a public hearing to take action on the proposed General Plans for both Morro Bay and Montana de Oro State Parks and proposed Natural Preserve classifications at both units. These plans detail proposals for development, management, and protection of significant coastal resources of the State Park System.

At this hearing, the planning staff will first present the Morro Bay State Park Preliminary General Plan, followed by public testimony and final action by the Park Commission. Presentation of the Montana de Oro State Park Preliminary General Plan is the second item on the agenda, and will also include public testimony and final action by the Park Commission.



State of California
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Appendix B: Resource Management Directives












Number

4. In State Parks, the principal acquisition objective is to acquire the ecological, cultural, and scenic entities that embrace the resources to be preserved or perpetuated, and to acquire lands outside but related to the prime resource areas that are necessary to provide the related protection, recreation, interpretation, and services.

In reserves, the acquisition objective is to acquire as ecological entities the natural values to be preserved or perpetuated, and the included cultural values, and also to acquire lands needed for access to, enjoyment of, protection of, and interpretation of the prime resources.

5. Development in state parks is to be located and designed to protect and enhance enjoyment of the primary resources. In state parks, the primary purpose for development is to place visitors in an optimal relationship with the resources, for recreational enjoyment and understanding of those resources. In state parks, resources may not be managed or manipulated to enhance recreational experiences.
35. It is an objective of the department to maintain the natural faunal habitat, wherever possible. The natural wildlife habitat is defined as the nature of the wildlife resources and habitat of each area before Euroamerican modification.
46. In each park system unit, environmental quality shall be such that visitors are aware of being in a place of special quality because of their surroundings. Manmade features and their maintenance will have special qualities which, in total, express a feeling of environmental quality that differs from areas where degrading and undesirable features and intrusions are commonplace.
70. Archeological values shall be identified, recorded, and evaluated by professionally qualified persons and provision shall be made for their protection and interpretation, when appropriate. Construction work shall not be undertaken until it has been determined by professional staff, designated by the director, that significant archeological resources will not be damaged.

Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

GRAPHIC SYMBOL	FACILITY – DESCRIPTION/COMPONENTS	ACTIVITY/PURPOSE
	ENTRY ROAD Vehicle access point.	<i>Public vehicular access.</i>
	PEDESTRIAN ACCESS Non-vehicle access point.	<i>Public non-vehicular access.</i>
	PUBLIC TRANSIT STOP Bus stop sign, bench.	<i>Public transit users access.</i>
	REST AREA Parking, restroom.	<i>Roadside rest area for travelers.</i>
	CONTACT STATION Small structure, entry gates, park information display, telephone, electricity, staff restroom, storage area.	<i>Fee collection, public information and safety, and control of park access.</i>
	RANGER STATION Structure for office, staff meeting area, park information display, dispatch radio, public telephone, restroom, staff shower. Structure(s) for maintenance shop, equipment and material storage (optional – may be located separately). Structure(s) or trailer pad(s) for employee housing (optional – may be located separately) utilities.	<i>Park administration, information, maintenance, public safety, storage of equipment and materials, employee living area.</i>
	SERVICE AREA Structure(s) for maintenance shop, equipment and material storage (when located separately from Ranger Station) utilities.	<i>Park maintenance, storage of equipment and materials.</i>
	EMPLOYEE HOUSING AREA Structure(s) or trailer pad(s) for employee housing (when located separately from Ranger Station) utilities.	<i>Employee living area.</i>
	VISITOR CENTER Structure for collections, interpretive displays, meeting area, theater, library, shop, docent headquarters, restroom, utilities.	<i>Public information and education, artifact and specimen preservation and storage, docent training and activities, sale of environmental information and documents.</i>
	ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER Structure(s) for sleeping, meetings, dining, instruction restroom, utilities, parking.	<i>Environmental education programs.</i>
	CAMPFIRE CENTER Stage, screen, electricity, seating, fire circle.	<i>Public entertainment, information, and education.</i>



FAMILY CAMPGROUND

The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains an individual flat parking pad, a picnic table, and a fire ring or BBQ. The campground includes: a road system, gates, water supply points, refuse collection points, and restrooms with showers.

Overnight use by families and individuals in self-contained vehicles, or cars/motorcycles with tents.



GROUP CAMPGROUND

The number units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains parking for 10 cars and one bus, a tent pitching area for 50 people, picnic tables, BBQs, a fire circle, a water supply point, a refuse collection point, a restroom with showers, and an open area for group activities and informal games. Several units may be clustered together to allow use by larger groups.

Overnight use by organized groups on a reservation basis.



HIKE-IN/BIKE-IN CAMPGROUND

The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains space for up to 5 people, a picnic table, a food/pack box, a fire ring or BBQ, 5 bicycle racks. Each group of units contains a water supply point, a refuse collection point, and a restroom with showers.

Overnight use by families, small groups, or individuals on foot or bicycles.



EQUESTRIAN CAMPGROUND

The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains a parking space for a vehicle and horse trailer, a picnic table, and a fire ring or BBQ. The staging area includes: corrals, a saddling area, a water supply, a refuse collection point, a manure collection point, and a restroom with showers.

Overnight use by families, groups, or individual horsemen.



WALK-IN CAMPGROUND

The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains space for up to 5 people, a picnic table, a food/pack box and a fire ring. Each group of units contains a refuse collection point and one restroom. Located no further than ¼ mile from the parking area.

Overnight use by families, small groups, or individuals who may be unable to backpack long distances.



TRAIL CAMP

The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains space for 15 backpackers/horseback riders, 3 fire rings, and a restroom. Temporary hitching post or corral (optional). Note: there is no water and no refuse collection points). Trail camps are located no closer than one mile from the trailhead.

Overnight use by families, small groups, or individual backpackers/horseback riders.



INTERPRETIVE EXHIBIT

Display panel(s).

Information and education.



RESTROOM

Portable toilet or pit toilet or comfort station or combination building. Utilities as required.

Sanitation.

	<p>SCENIC OVERLOOK Bench, locator map, interpretive exhibit (optional), hitching post.</p>	<i>Rest stop, public information.</i>
	<p>NATURAL HERITAGE POINT OF INTEREST Natural feature site, interpretive exhibit (optional).</p>	<i>Preservation, interpretation.</i>
	<p>CULTURAL HERITAGE POINT OF INTEREST Human activity site, interpretive exhibit (optional).</p>	<i>Preservation, interpretation.</i>
	<p>TRAILHEAD Parking, restroom, picnic tables, refuse collection point, water supply point (optional), interpretive display (optional), locator map.</p>	<i>Walking, hiking, and/or bicycling starting point, public information.</i>
	<p>TRAILHEAD – EQUESTRIAN Parking (15 vehicles and trailers), restroom, picnic tables, refuse collection point, manure collection point, eater supply point, interpretive display (optional), locator map.</p>	<i>Horseback riding starting point, public information.</i>
	<p>HIKING TRAIL Unpaved with varying lengths and degrees of difficulty, loop opportunities, rest stops with picnic tables.</p>	<i>Walking, hiking, jogging.</i>
	<p>EQUESTRIAN TRAIL Same as above.</p>	<i>Horseback riding, mountain bicycling, walking, hiking, jogging.</i>
	<p>BICYCLE TRAIL Destination type, paved.</p>	<i>Bicycle riding, walking, hiking, jogging.</i>
	<p>INTERPRETIVE TRAIL – SELF GUIDED Short length, loop trail with guide brochure, numbered posts and/or interpretive displays.</p>	<i>Walking, public education.</i>
	<p>BEACH Designated swimming/boating area, parking, restrooms, showers (optional), lifeguard stands (optional).</p>	<i>Swimming, sunbathing, boating.</i>
	<p>PARKING Paved or unpaved vehicle parking area. The number of spaces is as indicated on plan.</p>	<i>Vehicle parking.</i>
	<p>FAMILY PICNIC AREA The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains a parking space, a picnic table, and a BBQ. Each group of units contains a water supply point, a refuse collection point, a restroom.</p>	<i>Family picnicking, day-use activities.</i>
	<p>GROUP PICNIC AREA The number of units is as indicated on the plan. Each unit contains parking for 20 cars or 2 buses, 20 picnic tables, a group BBQ, a water supply point, a refuse collection point, a restroom, and an open area for group activities and informal games.</p>	<i>Group picnicking, day-use activities.</i>

Appendix D: CEQA Comments and Responses

The Department of Parks and Recreation circulated the Preliminary General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report for public review to state agencies through the State Clearinghouse, and to the Sierra Club, City of Morro Bay, County of San Luis Obispo, California Coastal Commission, Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay Golf Course Advisory Committee, Natural History Association Docent Council, and the Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of Small Wilderness Area Preservation, as well as to several individuals. Notice of availability was published in the San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune. Copies of the document were made available for public review at the County Library Branch in the City of Morro Bay and at the San Luis Obispo District Office of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Comments were received from the Morro Coast Audubon Society, San Luis Obispo County, California Native Plant Society, Docent Council, County Service Area #9, California Department of Fish and Game, and numerous individuals. The comments from the individuals and some of the other agencies primarily focused on the issue of the removal of eucalyptus from Montana de Oro State Park and, secondarily, on the issue of day use fees. These comments have been summarized and a single response has been prepared. For the other comments received, the numbered response corresponds to the indicated numbered sections in the comments.

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the State CEQA Guidelines, the Preliminary General Plan with the Response to Comments constitutes the Final EIR, and was certified and approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission at a June 1988 public hearing in the City of Morro Bay.

The letters received by the department and the responses to them may include references to page numbers, paragraphs, etc. Please note that these references are to the *preliminary* general plan document which was circulated for public review; those items will not be found in the same location in this document, the final general plan.

Response

1. Comment noted.
This has been discussed previously with the County.



Department of Planning and Building San Luis Obispo County

County Government Center
San Luis Obispo
California 93408
(805) 549-5600

Paul C. Crawford, AICP
Director

March 29, 1988

James M. Doyle, Supervisor
Environmental Review Section
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

RE: MONTANA DE CRO - Preliminary General Plan

Dear Mr. Doyle,

We have reviewed the above document and offer the following comments.

The draft plan involves land within the jurisdiction of the county and subject to the provisions of the county's Local Coastal Program. The county has recently gained certification of its entire Local Coastal Program (LCP) and the Coastal Commission will delegate permit authority to the county on March 31, 1988. The LCP contains a number of policies, standards and ordinances which will affect those projects anticipated in your draft general plan.

As a general comment, the draft plan appears to set forth a number of programs that will improve the park in the future. We are pleased with the scope and depth of the analysis. However, we do feel that some very important considerations may have been overlooked as to consistency with the county's Local Coastal Program:

1. As a procedural matter, it needs to be acknowledged that the county's LCP requires that the Park General Plan be submitted to the county for formal review consistent with policy 6, of the Recreation and Visitor-Serving Facility Chapter of the LCP Policy Document. The Development Plan process pursuant to section 23.02.034 of the Coastal

(1)

PCG:cd
APR 7 1988

8-2464

Zone Land Use Ordinance is the appropriate procedure for their formal review. This is required prior to implementation of the plan in the unincorporated area of the county and is meant to coordinate the various parts of the planning and permit processing steps of the General Plan. We would be glad to meet and discuss application and other review processes.

2. Based on a brief review of the land use proposals, we do not see any major problems with the draft plan, although we anticipate to conduct a more detailed consistency review upon development plan review.
3. As an informational matter, we have received a substantial number of signatures on petitions opposing the policy of eucalyptus tree removal. We will be reviewing this proposal in greater detail under authority for permit issuance delegated to the county pursuant to the Coastal Act and with applicable policies of the county's Local Coastal Program.

Early in the process, we provided you a copy of the county's Local Coastal Program. If you need any additional information or clarification of these points, please don't hesitate to call us.

Sincerely,



JOHN HOFFMEYER, Senior Planner
Local Coastal Program Coordinator

JH/sb/9603j
3/29/88

Response

2. The General Plan is incorrectly quoted. The GP reads, "necessary facilities to *help* meet current and future recreation demand" in recognition of the fact that the department could never meet all the recreational demand.

3. The reference to ocean swimming is made in the context of the recreational demand in San Luis Obispo County as a whole, not Montana de Oro State Park. This information comes from the most recent California Outdoor Recreation Resource Plan data available, not from the user surveys distributed at the individual State Park System units in the Morro Bay area.

4. The determination of the desirability or possibility of acquisition of these lands depends on too many factors to commit the department to the extent recommended.

5. The department has no authority to eliminate hunting from those state-owned lands which are in Morro Bay, but not within the State Park.

6. Enforcement of any regulation depends on the availability of patrol staff.

7. The department concurs.

8. The department does not agree that a 121-parking space increase will significantly diminish the park's natural atmosphere. That amount represents a 20% increase over existing capacity.

No agreements were made by the department on any issues or facilities at the June 1987 meeting. The alternative plans shown at the meeting and the

2801 Johnson Ave., #13
San Luis Obispo, Ca. 93401
March 30, 1988

Bruce L. Kranz, Manager
General Plan & Policy Development
Department of Parks & Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, Ca. 94296-0001

Dear Mr. Kranz:

I would like to submit the following comments on your Preliminary General Plan for Montana de Oro State Park.

On most issues, this plan reflects a reasonable balance between the need to protect natural resources and the demands of a growing population.

The following resource-oriented statements are helpful:
Establishing a California Coastal Trail link (page 4)
Protection of rare and endangered plants (page 54)
Coastal Dune Management/Livestock Grazing (page 58)
Acquisitions List (pages 92-93)
Keeping Spooner Cove unpaved (page 114)
Reduced Coon Creek parking (page 117)
Restrictions on mountain bikes (page 119)

Some specific problems:

2 Page 10: your goal of providing "necessary facilities to meet current and future demands" is unrealistic and it should be recognized as such. Just as every new freeway is overloaded soon after its opening and attracts additional users, so do developed park facilities. Meeting demand can only be achieved in the private sector, with its ability to respond to the market place without having to protect public lands.

3 Page 15: Where did you get the idea that ocean swimming is the SECOND HIGHEST projected demand here? According to your August 1987 Newsletter, 11% rated swimming at Atascadero State Beach (versus 46% walking), and only 9% at Montana de Oro (versus 41% walking).

4 Page 48: Could the policy statement on acquisition of upper watershed lands be strengthened from "shall consider acquiring" to "make every effort to acquire"?

5 Page 62: Could the waterfowl hunting policy be changed from "regulate" to "eliminate"?

6 Page 67: Could you make a Feral Animal Control commitment for more effective enforcement of the leash law, especially on Bluffs and Coon Creek trails, where un-leashed dogs are common?

7 Page 103: Pecho Road may need some minor changes, turnouts, bike lane, etc., but the reality that it is "narrow, scenic, and winding" is an asset. As well as a visual treat, its

condition serves to discourage speeding. Please minimize so-called improvements.

Parking Areas

More than any other single item, increased parking will attract more vehicles and diminish the park's natural atmosphere. On page 83, you state "capacity of the land for human recreation use is relatively low." On page 3 you indicate development of a "new 50-100 car sandspit parking area" and a "new 80-100 car Hazard Canyon beach access parking area." On page 99 you show plans to increase vehicles from 596 to 717, which seems too large. The agreement reached at the June 1987 workshop was for an 80-car Hazard Canyon parking area. Why did an additional 20 cars get in?

6

Water

Page 21: "Water used in park is trucked in from the City of Morro Bay and stored in tanks." Yet, you project (page 156) that water requirement will increase by 5,000 to 7,000 gallons per day with full development. You plan to add showers at Spooner's Cove. However, according to your survey of Montana de Oro users, showers were #15 on a list of "new and improved facilities requested" and "lack of flush toilets or showers" was at the very BOTTOM of the list of "what detracts from your visit" (page 156). Why supply something that isn't heavily demanded and is in short supply? Limited water supply is a very sensitive topic in this county.

7

Exotics

You list (page 27) mustard as an exotic. Do you plan to remove all mustard? How?

Your total-solution response to the eucalyptus is to remove all of them, at great cost in both money and community goodwill. Perhaps a compromise should be reached before you exhaust both of these valuable assets. Make some choices. Decide on a few areas that are most severely damaged by eucalyptus and recommend a limited removal, changing the wording on pages 56-57 to reflect a selective approach.

10

The You-can't-have-it-both-ways-department: On page 106 a new parking area is recommended because it is "now partially screened from the road by existing eucalyptus trees." On page 110 you say that South Hazard Canyon area is a good candidate for development because it's "vegetatively screened to minimize the visual impact." On page 112 you propose a site for a new center because it's "screened by vegetation" and a new campground that, again, is screened by "a thick fringe of vegetation." In all these cases, I believe the primary vegetation is eucalyptus.

Fee Entrance Station

What is the main purpose of the park entrance contact station? (page 103). Is it primarily to provide visitor information? Is it to protect visitors and resources? Is it to collect fees? If so, how will they be spent? The financial picture is not clear. Your sweeping eucalyptus plan is a huge expense. You say (page 152) there are no funds for acquisition of the Field Ranch. Will entrance fees be earmarked for either of these or will the revenue simply go into some departmental general

11

Plan recommendations to develop running water/flush toilets, etc. represent the most desirable situation to strive for, but one that the department may not necessarily be able to achieve. The recommendation was based in part on statewide visitor preferences, on departmental experience and maintenance concerns, as well as comments from Montana de Oro State Park visitors made in user surveys and at workshops indicating that the existing sanitary facilities need to be upgraded. The one-time cost for development of permanent comfort station buildings with running water and flush toilets, etc., while initially high compared to the installation of chemical toilets, is usually less expensive in the long-run because of the high costs associated with rental, frequent replacement, on-going maintenance, and sewage pump-out and hauling for chemical toilets. The other alternative, pit toilets, is not always a viable one depending on soil conditions. The General Plan makes a recommendation, but an actual determination of the most appropriate sanitary facilities cannot be made until specific

single plan shown in the newsletter and at the final meeting in September 1987 all indicated a 80-100 space parking area. The 80-100 spaces is the estimated capacity of existing roadside parking and it would be impossible to decrease the number of spaces needed to accommodate the existing use without incurring additional operational, safety, and resource problems.

9. The department recognizes that water supply is a sensitive issue along the coast. We, also, are concerned about water development and sewage disposal. The General

site development plans are prepared and additional tests made.

10. See Response to Eucalyptus Issue.

11. See Response to Pecho Road/Day Use Fee Issue.

12. "Public interests" are those opinions and concerns expressed to the planning team by individuals and special interest groups at public meetings, through letters, and in the user survey. These interests may or may not coincide with "departmental interests" for protecting park resources, providing recreation opportunities consistent with preservation of those resources, visitor safety, operational needs, etc.

13. The State Park entrance/contact station is in the Priority 1 list. Its listing as Priority 3 is a typographical error and has been corrected.

-3-

fund? Is the fee part of a political user-fee philosophy or is it needed to improve Montana de Oro? A clear explanation of its purpose might increase its acceptability.

Miscellaneous

12 What are the "departmental interests" to be considered, apart from "public interests" (page 11)?

13 The park entrance and contract station is listed as both Priority 1 and #3. Which is correct?

A few small editorial errors that should be cleaned up:

Page 6: 7,828 acres. Sept. 1986 Resource Element says 7,328.

Page 9: 1) "approval by California State Parks and Recreation Commission is required before to any development"

2) Montana de Oro was established in 1964.

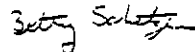
(On page 6: "Park began in 1965")

Pages 39-40: names should be consistent - are these the same people:

Mrs. Eleanor H. Maino; Eleanore H. Maino
Oscar C. Field; O.C. Field
Irene McAllister; Irene Starkey McAllister
Alden Spooner; Alden B. Spooner, Jr.; A.B. Spooner

Your efforts to plan for long-range protection are to be commended. Montana de Oro is a unique place. With some adjustments, your plans should guarantee it an appropriate future.

Sincerely,



Betty Schetzer



Morro Coast Audubon Society, Inc.

A Non-Profit Organization

April 11, 1988

Superintendent James Doyle
Environmental Review Section
Dept. of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Dear Supt. Doyle.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the preliminary general plan for Montana de Oro State Park. We find the plan to be well thought out and presented in a professional manner. The plan takes into consideration the ecological limiting factors of the park into the development of new sites. We do not feel that the plan tries to overdevelop the park. We see throughout the plan attempts to minimize the effects of humans on the park and to preserve the park's primitive character.

We feel though that the following points need to be addressed more fully.

14

1. Land Acquisition. We feel that the Park needs to make a commitment to acquire land around the park that it has identified as important. If the park does not make this commitment now they may lose the opportunity to acquire these lands.

We feel that there are two important areas that the park needs to pursue now, the end of the sand spit and the Field Ranch. While PC&E now needs the ranch for safety and security of the nuclear power plant after the plant is decommissioned (in 20-30 years) they will probably want to sell it. The park needs to obtain options on the entire ranch now.

15

2. Land Use. In keeping with the general land use objective of preserving the integrity and beauty of the landscape and the park's quiet primitive character, the park should develop a policy against any dumping of spoils from dredging of the bay onto park property.

RECEIVED

APR 13 1988

Post Office Box 160 - Morro Bay, California 93442

8-2687

Response

14. The Legislature must appropriate funds before the department can make commitments to acquire lands. The General Plan identifies both areas mentioned as desirable additions to the State Park.

15. Disposal on State Park System lands of soil from dredging requires departmental approval. In certain cases, such as beach replenishment, spoil disposal can benefit the unit. Therefore, the department does not want to categorically exclude all spoil disposal.

16. See Eucalyptus Issue Response.

17. Concur.

18. The department believes that the proposed "Wildlife Requiring Special Management Considerations" policy adequately serves as a protective policy for the snowy plover as well as other species of special concern. The General Plan is purposely non-specific to provide the management flexibility for the changing status of species.

19. More definite decisions on water development and sewage disposal are beyond the scope of the General Plan and will be made when specific site development plans are prepared for implementation.

20. The department is legally required to award concessions projects through the public bidding process.



Morro Coast Audubon Society, Inc.

A Non-Profit Organization

- 16 3. Exotic Species. We feel that controlling the eucalyptus is very important but do not at this time support the total removal of eucalyptus from the park. We support though the immediate removal of all eucalyptus from riparian areas. We feel in other areas that containment of the forest to prevent spreading and removal of saplings should be the management policy. If a plan for the complete removal of the eucalyptus is adopted, care should be taken in determining how big of a stand of trees needs to be left for monarch butterfly roosts. Temperature and humidity are important factors in roost site selection so the size of the remaining stands needs to be large enough for these factors to be met.
- 17 4. Least Terns. We support the policy for the California Least Tern. We wish to point out the importance of a continuing program of surveying areas for least tern nesting in light of the nest found on the sandspit in 1983. We feel that if a nesting colony is found, that the area needs to be fenced as well as posted to keep out predators and humans.
- 18 5. Snowy Plovers. The snowy plover was mentioned in the plan as a species of special concern, but no policy towards it was stated. Due to recent nomination by the National Audubon Society for listing as a threatened species, we feel that the park needs to formulate a policy for its protection. The park may want to consider closing its new access road to the sandspit (when built) to vehicular traffic during nesting season as well as posting the area.
- 19 6. Water Supply. We feel that water development and sewage disposal should be a number one priority. A more definite plan for both should be developed.
- 20 7. Camp KEEP. We feel that it is important to continue to run an environmental education program at Montana de Oro State Park. We view with concern the opening up of such a program to concessions through the public bidding process.

Post Office Box 160 - Morro Bay, California 93442



Morro Coast Audubon Society, Inc.

A Non-Profit Organization

We wish to thank the Parks and Recreation Department for the opportunities it allowed the public for input into the general plan and the incorporation of suggestions and concerns of the public into the plan.

Sincerely,

MORRO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Marta Jane Arnold
Marta Jane Arnold
Conservation Committee Member

Post Office Box 160 • Morro Bay, California 93442



THE DOCENT COUNCIL
of the San Luis Obispo Coast Area State Parks
Morro Bay State Park, Morro Bay, CA 93442

3/16/88

James Doyle, Supervisor
Environmental Review Section
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 92496-0001

Dear Supervisor Doyle,

A committee of the Docent Council has reviewed the Preliminary General Plans for Morro Bay State Park and Montana De Oro State Park and has agreed upon the following commentary.

First, we have been very pleased with the planners' reaction to our earlier input. In general terms, we believe the preliminary plans are good. We commend you and your associates. In most instances of negative comment below, our concern is timing or emphasis more than substance, as you will see.

To make our position as clear as possible, I will comment about each park facility separately.

MORRO BAY STATE PARK

1. We don't understand what's happening with the toilet facilities in the marina. Some are needed there, especially if you are going to upgrade the food facility there and put in a lot of picnic tables at the east end of the marina. The plan seems to call for eliminating the toilets but not replacing them.

2. The DPR policy for replacing exotic plants with native plants is one we agree with philosophically. We think it needs very careful thinking in this situation since removal of Monterey Cypress, Monterey Pine, and Eucalyptus from Morro Bay State park will also probably remove many of the 1.4 million visitors. The native replacement would be bush willow and scrub oak --and it would probably take several decades to get even that. Cutting of the existing trees will cause a huge public outcry and distort your ultimate goal. It seems to us you will find no objection to a policy of preventing reproduction of these species and their disappearance by attrition over the next thirty or forty years. We recommend that approach, with loud public proclamations of the policy since local news media give the impression a host of rangers are hovering on the edge of the forest with running chain saws.

RECEIVED
MAR 21 1988

~ 127 21

Hoffman to Doyle

page:2

3. The policy suggests the need for curatorial help in the preservation of historical photographs. As it happens, docents have updated, catalogued and stored all historical photographs in the museum this year according to standards outlined by the American Association of Museums. This was done with no state money, and is indicative of the kind of activity our docents can perform. We could perform miracles if we could get even small amounts of state money for other curatorial activities such as collections management, taxidermy, and so on.

4. Your plans — if any — for updating exhibits in the museum are inadequate, unspecific, and of far too low a priority. A committee of docents has been meeting museum staff for several months to determine the needs of the museum for exhibits which fit its purpose, style, and prospects. As of this writing, we are expecting a group from the state to sit down with our committee in the near future to review our process and progress to date. We believe the results of this effort will impact your plans.

5. The plan speaks of relocating the campfire center without specifying its relocation. At one time, the plan was to put it somewhere at the west end of the marina. We have not seen any recent specifics of a relocation, but we reiterate that any location in the western section of the marina is too windy and too cold to support the kind of campfire activity we think you want. Wherever the campfire center goes, it will need a surrounding of trees (exotic or otherwise) to break the wind.

6. We believe improvement of the heron rookery parking, platform, and handicap access deserves much more than priority level II. We also suggest that there be parking for five automobiles and one bus/motor home/camper. During its active months, this is one of the most popular sites in the park. We believe it should be a high priority activity.

7. At the same time, we believe the change of the road layout is placed on too high a priority and suggest it be moved down to level II. The engineering aspects of the new road may not have been as fully considered as they should have been. We believe the change will not only be inconvenient for campers, trailers, motor homes and the like — in the sense they will have a steep ascent immediately followed by a steep descent whenever entering or leaving the park — but will also contribute to potentially severe erosion in any wet winter we have. We understand the reasons for the proposed road relocation, but feel most other aspects of the plan will deliver a much better cost/benefit ratio. For example, the road relocation is

Hoffman to Doyle

page -3-

"justified" on the basis of a need for a Class I bicycle lane, but the bike lane for South Bay Blvd, which is much more heavily travelled with much higher speed traffic, is only destined for a Class II bike lane. Safe camper access to the marine meadow can be achieved at much lower cost with proper cross walks. And so on. We think serious reconsideration should be given to the plans for relocating State Park Road, and if the plan design is finally fixed upon, implementation should be a low priority.

8. Parking at the museum is improved only by space for two busses. We don't believe that is enough. We do need space for two busses, but we are finding more and more often these days that the museum parking lot is full for many of our activities even when no busses are there.

9. One of our docents was slightly offended by the statement (page 30) that "Trained and certified docents should be encouraged to aid the unit staff," "What the hell do they think we've been doing all these years?" was the reaction. The implication that we ought to do something we've been doing for a long time should not appear in the final document.

10. The plan refers to updating the Teachers Guide the DPR still sells. The Docent Council has felt it was so out of date we have not used it for many years. If a Teacher's Guide is needed, then the present one should be scrapped and a new one started from scratch.

11. The newly acquired property locally called the "Elfin Forest" (probably called the Otto Property by the DPR) is an important adjunct to Morro Bay State Park. It has a number of rare plants, an active small mammal and bird population, and is potentially a fine nature preserve. It is not "covered" significantly in the 20 year plan. It ought to be.

12. A number of very minor things grate. We are proud of the Eileen Bowen Learning Center; the plan misspells her name. Local birders will be glad to bet there hasn't been a Sage Sparrow in Morro Bay State Park in more than five years, yet it is still on your list. There's a typo which lists the annual number of visitors to the park as 1.4 people. None of these is vital to the plan but careful readers are jarred by such tiny things and all they really require is a bit more care in editing. At the same time, the summary in the Morro Bay State Park plan is excellent

Hoffman to Doyle

page: -4

while a similarly clear summary does not exist in the Montana de Oro plan.

MONTANA DE ORO

21. Our correct name is on the letterhead of this document. As used in some places in the report (page 149, for example) an impression is given that our volunteers serve only Morro Bay. We hope the correct name will be used in the final report.
22. In this report you say the DPR is going to survey the unit for Least Tern nesting sites. You may not be aware that the Point Reyes Bird Observatory in cooperation with local ornithologists, already has a long-term accurate study on this subject. The same is true of the Snowy Plover and other birds in area parks. We suggest your planners get together with local ornithologists before undertaking surveys in the area; some have already been done and errors about birds in the plans suggest lack of local knowledge.
23. We feel the question of mountain bikes is not adequately addressed in the plan. Mountain bikes are dangerous to hikers, horsemen, horticulture and holding soil. If the growth of biking (listed first in your Recreational Activities section) continues unregulated at the present rate we'll all be lucky if there's a usable and verdant Montana de Oro State Park in twenty years.
24. We feel the acquisition of the private land at the tip of the sandspit should be implemented as soon as possible. And acquisition of some portion of the former Field Ranch should be pursued vigorously.
25. We want to make sure significant improvements are made in the park before a contact station is installed. There will be great local resistance to a day-use fee unless local people see a significant visible effort to upgrade the park before a day-use fee is imposed.
26. When the issue of taking over Pecho Road comes up, local people will point out that county-maintained roads in Montana De Oro are excellent while DPR-maintained roads are deplorable.
27. We believe a very high priority should be given to the fencing of park east boundaries in the sandspit area and the curtailing of all vehicular traffic in that area except on a road to a parking lot as proposed. However, we feel that a 50-100 vehicle parking facility is a huge overkill. We recommend a maximum of 25 spaces and growth from there

developing guidelines for the regulation of mountain bike use within the State Park System. Recreational conflicts and resource protection will be the criteria for permitting or limiting their use.

24. The legislature must appropriate funds before the department can actively pursue acquisition of land. Acquisition of the tip of the sandspit is not considered as high a priority as some other desirable lands that are more threatened by the potential for adverse development.

25. See the Response to the Pecho Road/Day Use Fee issue.

26. Fencing of the State Park boundaries near Army Road and the sandspit is listed in the General Plan as Priority 1 for implementation. The number of spaces recommended for the proposed new sandspit parking area is based on the need to accommodate existing use. Estimates of existing use are based on first-hand observations by the park's operation staff.

Response

21. Correction noted.

22. Information noted.

23. The department recognizes mountain biking as a legitimate recreation activity. The department is currently

27. The purpose of a new parking area on the bluff south of the mouth of Hazard Canyon is to replace the existing parking along Pecho Valley Road in this area. An existing horse trail on the south side of the canyon will be improved to provide adequate pedestrian access to the beach as described in the General Plan. On the shoulder of the road near the start of the existing trail to the beach on the north side of the canyon, approximately 10 safe, head-in parking spaces can be developed. The existing trail to the beach on the north side of the canyon will remain for access to the beach from these spaces. Railings or signing will be installed along the road to prevent cars from continuing to park helter-skelter along the roadside.

28. Camp KEEP has indicated its interest in continuing to operate in its existing location while a permanent environmental education center is being developed.

29. Currently, cars park on both sides of Pecho Valley Road at

Hoffman to Doyle

page: -5

only as use requires it. The plan says there is a large existing facility at the end of Army Trail Road; there are never more than 5 or 6 cars there. A big new parking facility will increase park policing problems, we feel.

27. 8. We're not sure we understand the proposal for "beach access parking" south of Hazard Canyon. There is no beach south of Hazard Canyon until you get to Soconeri's Cove. If the notion is to put a parking lot on the top of the cliff south of Hazard Beach, then lots of cars will have to be taken with beach access since the grade is so steep and the new parking lot would be so far above the beach. Unless parking on the road is physically impossible and rules against it strictly enforced, there will still be a collection of cars in Hazard Creek valley since it is a virtually "water level" route to the beach and surfing. Not many surfers will want to carry a board up that cliff and not many elderly people will be able to drag their aging bodies up to a parking lot on top of the cliff south of Hazard Canyon unless beach access is reasonable from the proposed parking lot.

28. 9. Camp KEEP is an important entity in the park. It helps "train" the next generation to enjoy and preserve the park. Moving it may be a good idea, but any such movement should take place in a manner which keeps it open during the process.

29. 10. The plan calls for extending the Coastal Trail through the park. That brings to mind an event which is recurring more and more frequently. Parking at the Sea Cliffs Trail head is becoming difficult on weekends. We have come to feel that parking on the ocean side of the road at the Sea Cliffs Trail head should be prohibited, both physically and by regulation, and a 35-50 car facility be installed on the inland side of the road at the Soconeri's Cove entrance to the trail. That would leave the ocean side free for the Coastal Trail and "clean up" the trailhead on weekends. If anyone has to sit there and look at the ocean, they can get out of their vehicle to do it.

30. 11. Upgrading the parking area at Coon Creek is mentioned. We agree with that. But we feel that with the possible acquisition of some part of the former Field Ranch, whatever is done at Coon Creek should recognize that it is a very likely spot for a family camping facility when the park expands southward. The camping potential in that area should be evaluated before making a final plan for parking.

the Bluff Trailhead. Exactly how the parking area will be enlarged will not be determined until specific site development plans are prepared. However, existing and proposed use of this area does not justify development of a parking area as large as 35-50 spaces.

Hoffman to Doyle

page: -5

31

12. As in Morro Bay State Park, we feel the replacement of exotic plant species with native species should be done in Montana de Oro by attrition. The same "rule" we suggest for elimination of exotics at Morro Bay should apply at Montana De Oro. When we recommend elimination of new growth, we mean cutting out everything one inch or less in trunk diameter at ground level. We think the cutting of trees 8" in diameter or less, as we believe is being done currently, will not significantly increase the speed at which native plants take over the area while it will significantly decrease current enjoyment of the park. We, and scientists at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, consider it doubtful if anyone now living will see a self-sustaining native plant community where there is now eucalyptus in Montana de Oro.

32

13. Finally, we feel that increasing use of the park requires a system for supplying potable water to day-users and campers. We are being careful not to say where the water should come from, since we think that's a tough question, but we do believe potable water supplies are essential for an upgraded park facility.

We don't want to end this lengthy letter on a list of suggestions for amendments to the plans, so I am pleased to reiterate that we are grateful for the development made to date on these plans and approve unreservedly the myriad of ideas and proposals we have not commented upon.

respectfully,
for the Deceat Council


D.G. Hoffman, President

30. Over half of the public that evaluated development alternatives for Montana de Oro State Park rejected the idea of a campground at Coon Creek. Any plans for public access to the Fields Ranch should consider the sensitivity of the natural resources at the mouth of Coon Creek. In addition to a small wetlands area, the creek supports steelhead and the beach serves as wildlife habitat and roosting sites for many species of birds, including cormorants and gulls. This secluded beach has been protected up to now by the lack of public access to the area. If it is acquired as public property, the resources would be severely impacted by the heavy visitor use associated with development of a nearby campground.

31. See Eucalyptus Issue Response.

32. The plan recognizes the need to provide potable water.

Response

33. See Response to Pecho Valley Road/Day Use Fee Issue.

34. See Responses Nos. 27 and 29.



174 Craigway, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

20 March 88

James A. Doyle
Calif. Dept. of Parks & Recreation Gen. Plan, Montana
1416 Ninth Street De Oro State Park
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Doyle:

33

We have two points to comment on. The first is the closing of Pecho Rd and charging people to use the road. We are opposed to this. The second is the enlargement of parking areas. If this is merely widen the road it is alright. If it means carving out new parking lots we are opposed. We are in favor of better access and upgrading interpretive programs.

34

Yours truly,

Tim Gaskin
Conservation Chair

Coastal Commission
925 de la Vina, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RECEIVED

MAR 21 1988

8-1931

-2-

minimize any impacts on State Park System resources". The Department believes that any potential illegal hunting on State Park System property can be handled by proper signing and regulation enforcement, and that the elimination of hunting over a potentially large but undetermined area is unnecessary. The elimination of hunting from Morro Bay (a significant and traditional recreational pursuit) if these policies are fully and liberally implemented will eliminate one of the few places in California that unattached hunters have the opportunity to hunt black brant.

36

5. The policy of riparian ecosystem protection does not go far enough to adequately protect this critical habitat type from degradation by visitor use. The Department believes that all critical habitat areas should be protected from adverse impacts associated with human intrusion by a combination of regulations and physical barriers.

The Department is supportive of the resource protection measures proposed in these two documents with the exceptions of those noted above. With proper planning and execution the resources of these two beautiful State Parks can be adequately protected for future generations of Californians to enjoy while, at the same time, allowing maximum recreational opportunities to sportsmen.

If you have any further questions, please contact Jim Lidberg, Wildlife Biologist at (805) 528-0782; or Theodore Wooster, Environmental Services Supervisor at (707) 944-5500.

Pete Bontadelli
Pete Bontadelli
Director

Response

35. The policy is a direction to the department and its staff to cooperate with the Department of Fish and Game in the regulation, not elimination, of hunting. There is no proposal for the elimination of hunting.

36. The department feels the proposed policy is appropriate given the two, sometimes conflicting, missions of the State Park System: protection of the resources and the provision of recreational opportunities.

COUNTY SERVICE AREA #9

Los Ocos Baywood Park
 c/o Ellen Sanford, Chairman
 1820 Mountain View Drive
 Los Ocos, CA 93402

Directors Office
 MAR 21 1988
 COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
 March 15, 1988

Mr. Henry R. Aguirre, Secretary
 State Park & Recreation Commission
 PO Box 942894, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Dear Mr. Aguirre:


I'm writing on behalf of the County Service Area #9 Advisory Council whose monthly general meeting was held on Thursday, March 10, 1988 in the South Bay Community Center in Los Ocos.

It was the unanimous decision of that Nine person Board to register a formal complaint with you that not adequate time has been allowed to study your General Plan as it applies to Montano De Oro in Los Ocos. Even the County Supervisors did not receive a written copy of this plan until the 8th of March...Hardly enough time to read and study the entire plan, make written or verbal comment and return it to you by March 25th. We are therefore asking that you extend this deadline by 30 days to April 25, 1988 so that the community being impacted, has adequate time to study your general plan. Since the hearing for this is not scheduled until June 10, this would still give ample opportunity to your department to study comments before that date.

We are also extremely concerned with your plan to spend several million dollars cutting down the Eucalyptus trees in the park and replacing them with "more suitable, natural trees". We strongly oppose this needless expense and suggest that there are several other, much cheaper alternatives to your plan. We suggest that perhaps you look into the study done by California Polytechnic State University Natural Resources Management Department in March of last year.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter as soon as possible. My telephone number is (805) 528-3212, should you wish to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ellen R. Sanford, Chairman
 COUNTY SERVICE AREA #9
 Los Ocos, CA 93402

cc: Lorraine Hennessy
 Senator Kenneth Maddy
 Assemblyman Eric Sorenson
 Supervisor William Coy, District Two

RECEIVED
 MAR 22 1988

8-1922

Appendix D

of California

The Resources Agency

Memorandum

To : 1. Projects Coordinator
Resources Agency

2. Mr. James H. Doyle
California Department of Parks
and Recreation
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Date : March 22, 1988

From : Department of Fish and Game

Subject: Morro Bay State Park and Montana de Oro State Park General Plans,
Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo County, SCR 487040815

Department of Fish and Game (Department) personnel have reviewed the preliminary General Plans for the Morro Bay State Park and the Montana de Oro State Park, SCR 487040815 located in and near the communities of Morro Bay and Los Osos, San Luis Obispo County and we have the following comments:

1. The Morro Bay State Park (MSSP) preliminary General Plan has, as one of its objectives, the transfer of all State tidelands and wetlands east of a line from White's Point south to the western edge of Baywood Park to the MSSP Unit. The stated purpose of this transfer is the elimination of waterfowl hunting within the transferred area.
2. The stated reasons for this desired cessation of waterfowl hunting are primarily related to the active nature of hunting, i.e., the noise, the disturbance to those "seeking a natural setting for quiet contemplation and solitude", and conflicts with bird watchers.
3. The Department believes that there are no current or anticipated threats to these wetlands that would be eliminated by this land transfer. Therefore, the proposed change of ownership and the elimination of a long-standing, biologically sound recreational use of a resource is not justified. A fairly high number of waterfowl hunters use the shoreline area to provide access to the Bay, and the elimination of hunting in this area would significantly reduce the number of hunter-days available on Morro Bay.
4. A related policy of the Montana de Oro State Park Preliminary General Plan is ~~also~~ require (sic) of hunting, adjacent to Montana de Oro State Park, to

35



**Eucalyptus
Issue -
Response to
Comments 10,
16, and 31**

Many people voiced opposition to the proposed policy to remove the eucalyptus plantations and restore native vegetation. Most of the people felt that the eucalyptus are an important component in the landscape even though they are not native to California. Some people also questioned the cost and feasibility of removing the eucalyptus trees.

In response to public comment, the Department's proposed policy has been revised. The policy now calls for over 80% of the existing eucalyptus to be retained until further studies are conducted and a few trial restoration projects are evaluated. The policy allows for continuation of the existing containment program and a new interim management program. The containment program is basically an ongoing maintenance activity to keep the plantations from spreading further into and displacing native vegetation. Under this program, eucalyptus seedlings and other trees under 8 inches in diameter are removed around the perimeter of the existing groves. The interim program would also allow for the removal of larger trees in the riparian zone and in a small number of trial restoration sites in upland areas. Management activities in the riparian zone would be focused on the restoration of native trees and understory plants. Riparian areas with a multi-layered canopy provide essential habitat for many resident wildlife species as well as many species from other nearby biotic communities. Eucalyptus trees in the riparian zone adversely affecting restoration efforts would be removed. Most of these trees are in or very near the creekbeds. Trees up to 100 feet from the centerline of the creekbeds may need to be removed in some locations. None of these trees were part of the original plantation.

Restoration trials in the upland areas would involve the removal of not more than a total of 16 acres of eucalyptus to evaluate various methods of removal and restoration. The upland trials would involve from 3 to 5 different sites with no one site being over 5 acres in size. A number of trial areas are needed because the site characteristics of the existing plantation groves are very different. In addition to being comprised of several species of eucalyptus, the existing groves occur on sites with different soils, slope, aspect, and with varying degrees of understory vegetation. Trial sites will be selected based upon an evaluation of pristine vegetation studies, various site characteristics, road access, and visibility from major public viewpoints. Special consideration will be given to selecting sites where revegetation would include indigenous trees. Reestablishing indigenous trees in areas outside of the existing eucalyptus plantations that are shown by ecological studies to have once supported native trees will be considered in addition to these trial efforts. Trial sites will not be placed in any area known to be important to the monarch butterfly. The size of the trial sites will vary depending on the site characteristics. Sites will be from 1 to 5 acres in size (no more than a total of 16 acres) to adequately evaluate revegetation efforts and cost effectiveness.

Based upon an evaluation of the results of the containment and the interim management programs, a long-term management plan will eventually be prepared to direct management of the eucalyptus and the restoration of native vegetation.

Before any eucalyptus are removed under the interim or long-term management program, plans will be prepared providing specific detail of the proposed actions. These plans will be subject to review under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, and to approval under the coastal development permit process.

The following is the new policy:

The existing eucalyptus containment program aimed at controlling the spread of eucalyptus from the original plantations should continue. These efforts are needed to maintain the eucalyptus plantations within their original planted boundaries.

Studies shall be conducted to determine which plant communities were indigenous to the sites now occupied by eucalyptus plantations. Additional field investigations shall also be conducted to determine if any of the eucalyptus provides important habitat for the monarch butterfly.

Based upon the results of these and other studies, an interim management program shall be developed. The objectives of this program shall be to:

- 1. Provide for the perpetuation of any habitat found to be important to monarchs.*
- 2. Restore the native plant communities within the riparian zone.*
- 3. Initiate trial restoration efforts involving the removal of not more than a total of 16 acres of original plantation trees. Three to five trial sites shall be selected to evaluate different site characteristics and restoration methods. No site shall be over 5 acres in size.*

The interim program shall include an environmental assessment of the proposed action and shall be subject to review through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the coastal development permit process.

Based upon the evaluation of the interim program, a long-term plan shall be developed for managing the eucalyptus plantations and restoring areas to native vegetation. The long-term plan shall be subject to the CEQA and coastal development permit review processes.

**Pecho Valley
Road/Day Use
Fees -
Response to
Comments 11,
25, and 33**

Numerous public comments were received regarding the general plan recommendation to acquire Pecho Valley Road from the County of San Luis Obispo for installation of a visitor contact station at the entrance to the state park. It was commonly expressed that user fees, and in particular day use fees, would discourage the regular, day-to-day use of the park by the local residents.

The acquisition of Pecho Valley Road from the county is recommended for two reasons: (1) the department would assume maintenance and improvement responsibility from the county, and (2) a visitor contact station would provide a means of controlling traffic and visitor use levels.

The department cannot expend funds for repairs or improvements unless it has a possessory interest in the property. The department is concerned that, given the county budget limitations and the relative unimportance of Pecho Valley Road to the county's transportation system, maintenance of the road will suffer. Nor is it realistic to expect the county to provide the funds necessary for improvements within the roadway corridor for parking as needed for recreation use. Secondly, the acquisition of the road from the county will permit the department to control the level of use as needed in the park. As a county road, the department has no legal authority to restrict vehicular traffic if desirable or necessary for the safety, protection of resources, or the provision of the "wilderness" recreational experience.

Day use fees have created considerable controversy in the perception that they discriminate against the financially restricted or discourage casual, short-term, local resident use. These are valid criticisms. The other side of the argument is that fees direct the costs to the direct beneficiaries, the users. User fees do not cover the full costs of operation for the State Park System, nor are they expected to on the principle that the public in general benefits from the use of the State Park and therefore should also contribute to the cost of operation. Revenues from user fees are deposited in the state's General Fund; there is no direct return to the unit from which the fees are collected.